

The Life and Ministry of Christ



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Everything that we hold and believe as a Christian revolves around the person and work of Jesus Christ. Every promise, hope, and provision offered to believers comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life deserves a close study and careful devotion.

Christ's Birth

The generally accepted date of Jesus' birth is somewhere around December B.C. 5. The Gospel account gives clear details of the events surrounding Christ's birth, life, ministry and miracles. The Prophet Micah was shown the Promised One arising from Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus occurred as promised in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod the king. The Angel Gabriel appeared to the virgin Mary and informed her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and she would conceive a Son Who would be called the Son of God, (Luke 1:35). At eight days old, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised and named, Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:21; Luke 2:22-38. After His birth in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him,"* (Matthew 2:1-2). When Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel that king Herod was going to try to kill Him, they fled to Egypt, Matthew 2:13-15. After a short time in Egypt, Joseph and Mary returned to their home town in Nazareth where Jesus grew up and was trained as a carpenter, Matthew 2:19-23, Luke 2:39-40. The only recorded event of His early life was the trip His family made to Jerusalem when He was twelve, Luke 2:41-52.

At the age of thirty (30) Jesus began His public ministry. The life and ministry of Christ can be easily divided into three periods of time.

First, the year of introduction.

Second, the year of popularity.

Third, the year of opposition.

Each of the Gospel writers gave a report of the life of Christ from their own point of view and with specific audiences in mind. They made no attempt to exactly trace the chronology or full events of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

First, the year of introduction.

Baptism

The year of the Lord's introduction began with His baptism by John in the Jordan River, (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18). John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* God had filled John with the Holy Spirit, prepared and called him to be the forerunner of the Christ, (Luke 1:15, 41). He had a ministry of repentance and baptism to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. He had a vision of Jesus being the baptizer in the Holy Spirit and the One Who executes the last judgment.

Matthew 3:11 NKJV I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:12 NKJV His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 3:13-14 NKJV Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

Matthew 3:15 NKJV But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

By identifying with those He came to redeem, Jesus inaugurated His public ministry as the Messiah. It was necessary for Him to fulfill all righteousness, not because He was a sinner, but He had to be identified with the people He was sent to save.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "He Who knew no sin became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Holy Spirit

Mark 1:10-11 NKJV And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The life and ministry of Christ were characterized by His anointing and filling of the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah testified of the Messiah in Isaiah 11:2 and said, "The Spirit of the LORD would rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD."

John 1:32 NKJV And John bore witness, saying, *“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.”*

It is important that Jesus was not the only one Who witnessed this event. It is affirming that those present saw the visual manifestation of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus from heaven like a dove and remaining upon Him. The Holy Spirit’s presence was also witnessed in the manner in which Jesus ministered and lived. After the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, the voice of the Father was heard from heaven.

Matthew 3:17 NKJV And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

Here at the baptism of Jesus, the divine trinity is witnessed. The Holy Spirit was present in the physical form of a dove descending and resting on Jesus, the Son of God, and the Father from heaven said, *“This is my Beloved Son...”*

Temptation

After His baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Why was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for forty days? In order to be our Kinsman Redeemer, Christ must be tempted in every manner in which we are. The forty days in the wilderness were true temptations by the devil. Satan did whatever he could to entice and provoke the Son of Man to sin. The Holy Spirit did not lead Jesus toward sin but to try His faith and demonstrate the power of a victorious life through the Spirit. Throughout the temptations, Jesus overcame through the Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. His victory over Satan’s temptations demonstrates to us the power that resides in the Word of God.

James 1:12 NKJV Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:13-14 NKJV Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Christ’s temptations were just as real as the things that we face, yet, in every one of them He did not sin.

Luke 4:13 NKJV Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

What does this mean?

Christ's temptations in the wilderness were not the only times that Satan came against Jesus. After overcoming the forty days of temptations by Satan, we are shown the sustaining ministry of God's angels, (Mark 1:13). Today's victories do not imply that Satan will stop harassing and tempting you. We must remain vigilant in our spiritual warfare. Hebrews 1:14 tells us, "the angels of the Lord are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation."

Anointed with Holy Spirit and power

After the forty days of temptations, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit.

Luke 4:14–15 NKJV Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

Luke 4:16 NKJV So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

Nazareth is located between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. After the baptism that was preached by John, Jesus began ministering throughout all Judea under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 10:38). He proclaimed the Word in the power of the Spirit throughout to Galilee and all Judea, (Acts 10:37).

Acts 10:37 NIV84 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—

Acts 10:38 NIV84 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Acts 10:39 NIV84 We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree,

Isaiah prophesied about Christ's ministry.

Isaiah 61:1 NKJV The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Isaiah 61:2 NKJV To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

Isaiah 61:3 NKJV To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

Jesus ministered under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

His ministry under the influence of the Holy Spirit is typical of the ministry that His disciples enjoyed and what is possible by the power of the Spirit.

John's witness to the Priest and Levites

(John 1:19-28; Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:3-16)

After returning from the wilderness temptation, Jesus again came to John, in John 1:19-28. John was still preaching, baptizing and preparing the way for Christ. Certain priests and Levites from Jerusalem came out to John and asked him, “*Who are you?*” They wanted to know if he was Elijah, one of the Prophets, or maybe even the Christ. John denied all of their questions.

John 1:2 NKJV John said: “*I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’ ’ as the prophet Isaiah said.*”

The Pharisees asked him, “*Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?*” (John 1:24-25) Remember, after the temptation, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee where John was baptizing. (Luke 4:14) When John saw Jesus coming toward him, John answered the Pharisees.

John 1:26–27 NKJV John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

This all took place at Bethany, where John was baptizing at the place of the crossing of the Jordan River. It is believed that this is the place where the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground to go into the Promised Land. John 1:29-34 is a true testimony by John the Baptist of Who Jesus really is.

The next day

John 1:29 NKJV The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and

said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John is recounting to those present what had happened when Jesus was baptized some forty days prior, (John 1:29-34). (Baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22) As soon as He entered His public ministry, Jesus began calling His disciples.

Jesus’ first disciples (John 1:35-49)

John 1:35–37 NKJV Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Galilee – Andrew and Peter

Matthew 1:18 tells us that Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and saw Andrew and Peter who were disciples of John until this crucial initial introduction to Jesus. Simon Peter and Andrew his brother were casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. John says it was about four o’clock and they remained with Jesus that day, (John 1:39). Andrew introduced Simon Peter to Jesus, (John 1:40-42). Matthew and Mark cover this event in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22.

Matthew 4:19–20 NKJV Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

James and John

Going on from there, Jesus saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee, mending their nets, (Matthew 4:21-22). He called them and they immediately left the boat and followed Him.

Philip

The next day Jesus went to Galilee, (John 1:43-51). It appears to be the day after Jesus found Peter, Andrew, James and John that He found Philip. John says it was the next day after Jesus first met Peter and Andrew.

John 1:43–44 NKJV The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip found Nathanael

Nathanael appears to be the first person brought to Christ by one of the twelve disciples. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “*We have*

found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45) Nathanael had trouble believing that anything good could come out of Nazareth but Philip encouraged him to come and see, (John 1:46). As Nathanael came near, Jesus said to him; *“Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”* Think about this. Jesus already knew who Nathanael was. Nathanael of John 1:45-51 is believed to be the same person as Bartholomew. It is believed that Bartholomew is the surname of Nathanael.

John 1:48-49 NKJV Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

John 1:50 NKJV Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”

John 1:51 NKJV And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”