

Introduction

The birth of Jesus was very unusual. His mother Mary was found to be pregnant before she and Joseph were married. Since the Jewish engagement was almost like a marriage in that it required a divorce to break, Joseph decided to divorce Mary quietly to lessen her disgrace. But before Joseph could divorce her, an angel appeared to him in a dream,

... saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Matthew 1:20-21

In obedience to the Lord, Joseph and Mary were married as planned.

The angel Gabriel had visited Mary earlier and had explained that the Holy Spirit would cause her to conceive Jesus. Knowing that this would be awkward for Mary to explain to Joseph, The Lord sent an angel to Joseph.

The Bible does not tell much about Jesus' childhood education, but we can surmise what must have happened since we have knowledge of Jewish customs at the time.

Jewish mothers were the primary teachers of young children. Mary probably taught Jesus the *shema*

as soon as he could speak. The

shema□

(Hebrew, "Hear") is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and is Judaism's basic confession of faith. Jesus later quoted Deuteronomy 6: 4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 in answer to a scribe's question:

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all

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the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Mark 12:28-34

The Book of Psalms was his hymnbook. Singing the scriptures was an excellent way to memorize them.

Joseph assumed the primary role of teacher for Jesus when he was about six years old. This probably included teaching the young boy the Old Testament Scriptures as well as teaching him the carpenter trade. Edersheim thinks that Jesus' family had a personal copy of the Old Testament. If not, the local synagogue would have had a copy.

Since education was compulsory, Jesus must have started synagogue school when he was eight. He would have attended synagogue services at least once a week for twenty years. As a reader in the synagogue, he would have learned Hebrew. As a Jew, he spoke the common language Aramaic. He may have spoken Latin, the language of the Roman Empire. He may have also spoken *Koinē* (Common) Greek, the universal language of his time. *Koinē* Greek was the prevailing language of the world, from 300 B.C. to A.D. 500. The New Testament was written in

in *Ko*
ē Greek. [J. Gresham Machen, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 3].

Mary and Joseph were upright, faithful followers of God and they provided good role models for the Lord Jesus.

There are eighteen silent years of Jesus—from his twelfth birthday until his baptism by John. However, these were active years of maturing spiritually, mentally, physically and socially:

And Jesus increased in wisdom [intellectual and moral development] and stature [physical growth and development of psychomotor skills], and in favour with God [spiritual growth] and man [social development].

Luke 2:52

Joseph probably died during those years, because he no longer appears in the Gospels, whereas Mary and her other children do.

Let us now turn from the background of Jesus to view him as the perfect man—a model for all of us.

Explanatory notes:

The importance of the teaching aspect of Jesus' ministry was shown by his titles in the New Testament. He was called *didaskalos*, "teacher" 45 times in the 4 gospels and never *kerux*, "preacher," although he did *kerusso* "preach" (Matthew 4:17). By including all the terms equivalent to "teacher," he was called teacher 61 times. Even his enemies called him "teacher" and he also called himself "teacher." (Statics are from Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, as is most of the material in the introduction.)

To preach (*kerussein*) [Matthew 4:17] Originally, to discharge the duty of a herald (*kerux*); hence to cry out, proclaim, (see on 2 Peter 2:5). The standing expression in the New Testament for the proclamation of the Gospel; but confined to the primary announcement of the message and facts of salvation, and not including continuous instruction in the contents and connections of the message, which is expressed by *didaskein* (to teach). Both words are used in Matthew 4:23; Matthew 9:35; Matthew 11:1). Marvin Vincent 1886 *Vincent's Word Studies*, S.v., "Matthew 4:17"

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In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity

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