

# Jesus Christ: The First Thirty Years

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## **Introduction**

Jesus Christ's public ministry began upon His baptism at the age of about thirty:

Luke 3:21-23

*[21] Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, [22] And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. [23] And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli*

Before this, we know very little about His life.

Some ridiculous traditions claim that during His early life He turned clay into birds, or visited Glastonbury. But we don't know any of these things, and we are not going to know either, because they are not in the Bible. Anything outside of the Bible is at best a guess, and at worst, pure fantasy. Here we stick to what the Bible says. This is the only reliable source of information we have.

In the Bible, we have very little information about Christ's early life. We have details of His conception and birth, His being taken to the Temple for Mary's purification, and the fact that He with His family had to flee to Egypt. We also have one incident when He went to the Temple for Passover with His family at the age of twelve. That is it. On top of this we can come to some other conclusions, deduced from His character and how people treated Him as an adult. But this is all we know, and all we can know about His first thirty years.

And that's because we don't need to know anything else about His early life. The Bible contains all we need to know, and concentrates on His public ministry, namely His life from His baptism at the age of about thirty, through to His death, resurrection and ascension. This is His witness to the world to shew us who He really was. Everything else about His life is irrelevant, as far as we are concerned.

## Jesus Christ as an Infant

### **Conception**

Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. This was unique. Both the virgin and her espoused husband found out about the pregnancy separately, and, not surprisingly, both were totally perplexed about the whole matter.

Luke's account details this from the virgin's perspective:

#### **Luke 1:26-35**

***[26] And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, [27] To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.***

Here we are introduced to the mother, Mary, and her espoused husband-to-be Joseph. We also find out that Joseph was of the ancestral line of King David. This is important, as we shall see later on. And we find out that Mary lived in Nazareth. Nazareth had for a long time been known as a backwater. There was a derogatory saying about it:

John 1:46

*[46] And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.*

And an angel appeared to Mary. Not any old angel. This was Gabriel himself. He and Michael are the only two named angels in the whole of Scripture. There are only two other mentions of Gabriel in Scripture. One is in an appearance to Daniel, about 550 years before this:

Daniel 8:16

*[16] And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.*

The other is more recently. To Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, six months earlier, announcing another "impossible" pregnancy:

Luke 1:18-20

*[18] And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. [19] And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. [20] And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*

Zachariah did not believe Gabriel's words and was struck dumb until the birth. Needless to say, Mary, although not struck dumb, was also troubled, scared, and perplexed by this visitation:

***[28] And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. [29] And when she saw him,***

***she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.***

The angel called her “*highly favoured*” and “*blessed*,” which she indeed was. But even though the angel was kind to her, Mary was troubled and didn’t quite know what all this meant. She questioned the salutation in her own mind. And that’s not surprising. An angel, probably appearing as a strange man, had suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Joseph was not around, she was on her own. What’s this man after? People in this world lie and cheat their way through life. They are such smooth talkers, and seem so nice, but they want something far different from the way they treat us:

Psalm 55:21

*[21] The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

So Mary was, quite understandably wary of this character that had suddenly appeared.

***[30] And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. [31] And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. [32] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: [33] And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.***

The angel comforts Mary and tells her not to fear. And then gives her a prophecy about her conceiving a child in her womb. So, a strange man has appeared while she was on her own and starts talking about conceiving. If I was her, at this point, I would have called the police. But the angel then goes on to mention “*the throne of His father David.*” Nobody else but Mary would have known that actually, Joseph was a direct descendant of King David.

The monarchy in Judah had ended after the nation was exiled into Babylon around 500 years before the birth of Christ. In Matthew chapter 1, we have a genealogy, starting with Abraham, going through King David, and continuing through all the kings of Judah up to the exile. But it also continues beyond the exile, right up to Joseph himself. So, had the monarchy continued, which it didn’t, then Joseph would have been the rightful king of Judah. He wasn’t king of anywhere now, because the descendants of the old kings had all become private citizens, even the latest “king,” Joseph, having become a very ordinary carpenter in the backwater of Nazareth.

Nobody would have known that Joseph was the “king,” the monarchy had long since been discontinued for many centuries. This is important, because once Joseph dies, his firstborn Son would be the one who would continue this line. We know that Joseph wasn’t really the father of Jesus Christ, but all the same, Jesus Christ is counted as his firstborn Son. And so Christ really did become the “King of the Jews,” although nobody would recognise this. That is apart from Pilate who insisted that this epithet remained above Christ as He was crucified on the cross.

Mary begins to believe the angel, but still does not understand how she would conceive:

***[34] Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?***

Mary did not understand how it was possible for her to have a child without the aid of a man. Would Joseph be the father? Would Gabriel? It's still quite a frightening situation for her.

***[35] And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.***

The Holy Spirit is going to be the father of the child. The child will be the Son of God. And to confirm what he is saying, Gabriel continues by mentioning Mary's cousin Elisabeth, who had also miraculously just become pregnant with John the Baptist, even though she was naturally past child-bearing age. If God can do that, He can plant a child in Mary's womb without the aid of a man:

***[36] And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. [37] For with God nothing shall be impossible.***

And, as a godly believer, Mary understands and accepts her situation, now knowing for sure that this angel came from the Lord:

***[38] And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.***

Joseph wasn't present at Gabriel's visit to Mary. Matthew's account details this whole situation from Joseph's perspective:

#### **Matthew 1:18-24**

***[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.***

So, Mary has been "found with child." And Joseph gets to know about it. He must have thought that the father was somebody else. He couldn't possibly have thought any other way:

***[19] Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.***

What would an ungodly man do at this point, if he thought his wife had cheated on him? "Domestic violence" is very common these days. People take it upon themselves to try to deal with the situation themselves. That's the way the world deals with these things. But Joseph was a "just" man. He was a godly believer, just as Mary was. Such a reaction would be far from a godly man. A godly man would try to sort things out properly.

Firstly, he could forgive her, but that would only be possible if she repented, or at least gave a credible profession of repentance. That's what the Lord Himself taught us:

Luke 17:3,4

*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and **if he repent, forgive him**. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

But in Joseph's case, he couldn't forgive, because Mary couldn't repent. She hadn't done anything wrong. Joseph thought she had, but she hadn't, so to forgive Mary wasn't an option for Joseph.

The second option a just man could have, is that he could "*make her a public example.*" That would mean having her put to death by the civil magistrate:

Leviticus 20:10

*And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*

And this applies not just to married people, but to betrothed parties as well:

Deuteronomy 22:23,24

*If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die....*

It then goes on to say, if it was in the city both should die, but if in the field only the man, because she may have called and nobody heard. Either way, it involved a public stoning to death.

But Joseph didn't want this option. He just wanted the whole sorry thing over with quickly. So he "*was minded to put her away privily,*" or quietly, with the minimum of fuss. Instead of stoning to death, Moses' law also gave the option of divorce. A betrothal still had to obtain an official divorce, and this was the simplest way forward for Joseph.

But he had a dream, and was visited by an angel. Not Gabriel, but the "*angel of the Lord*":

***[20] But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto 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.***

The angel tells Joseph of his ancestry, "*Thou son of David.*" This was to remind him that the promised Messiah was going to come through his line. And now, the time had come for this to finally happen. And there was a pattern in this timing:

Matthew 1:17

*[17] So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.*

So the angel comforts Joseph, and tells him not to divorce Mary, which he'd been minded to do, because what she'd been saying all along was the truth. That which was conceived

in her really **was** of the Holy Ghost, and no other man was involved. So Joseph accepted this. And then the angel gave a prophecy about this holy child:

***[21] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.***

Joseph is told the child's sex, unusually a male, when no male was involved in the conception. And he was also told what name he was to give Him. Mary was told the same name, separately, when the angel Gabriel visited her.

And we've got a reason that this name was to be used. It means, "He saves." Throughout the Old Testament period, a Messiah, an Anointed One, a Saviour was prophesied who would come from the line of David. And here He is. But what does He save from? Most of those looking for a Saviour in Israel, thought He'd be a political or military leader. And after the Romans occupied their land, they were particularly looking for one who could save them from Roman oppression. But He was never going to be anything like that.

Joseph is told exactly what the Saviour was going to come for. "*He shall save His people*" not from earthly oppression, but "*from their sins.*"

And Joseph is told that this was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, over 700 years before:

***[22] Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, [23] Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.***

Joseph recognised this prophecy. He knew he himself was the direct descendant of the kings of Judah. Maybe he even recognised the time was ripe for this to happen. Joseph and Mary were both godly people, and so Joseph, recognising the truth, went ahead and took Mary as his wife, as the Lord had told him to do through the angel. But they didn't come together until after the child Jesus was born:

***[24] Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: [25] And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.***

As soon as Joseph knew for sure that this child was the Son of God, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Joseph "*took unto him his wife,*" but Joseph "*knew her not*" until the birth.

This could well have been a difficult situation for them. Everybody else in Nazareth could easily have thought that Jesus had been conceived out of wedlock, so the quick marriage was necessary to quell any rumours.

After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had other children themselves, in the usual way. They had at least six other children apart from Jesus. Four boys and at least two girls:

Matthew 13:55,56

*[55] Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? [56] And his sisters, are they not all with us?...*

Mark 6:3

*[3] Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?*

This is the family that Jesus Christ was born into and grew up with. And, it is also worth mentioning that, these are the only verses in Scripture where we find out that Joseph was a carpenter by trade, and trained his firstborn Son in the same occupation.

## ***Birth***

At the same time as our Lord had been placed in Mary's womb in Nazareth, way over in Rome, completely separately, the Emperor, Caesar Augustus, had decided to tax the whole of his Roman Empire:

**Luke 2:1-20**

***[1] And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.***

This seems to have been a one off event, because many years later in the book of Acts there's a reference to an uprising that took place in "*the days of the taxing,*" which implies it was a unique occasion:

Acts 5:37

*[37] After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him....*

***[2] (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)***

The Bible pinpoints the time of this taxing, and consequently the birth of Christ, quite accurately. It was at the same time that Caesar Augustus was ruling in Rome, Cyrenius ruling in Syria and Herod the Great in Judea. All three would have all been in power at the same time for only a handful of years at most.

***[3] And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.***

Every family in the Roman Empire had to go to the head of household's home city in order to do this. This must have been a huge migration of people throughout the whole Empire. It must have caused unprecedented difficulties for the population, all at the whim of the emperor.

And there were obviously no exceptions allowed, because Mary had to go to Joseph's home town whilst heavily pregnant:

***[4] And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and***

***lineage of David:) [5] To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.***

It was this one-off decree from Caesar Augustus in Rome that sent Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David, because Joseph was “*of the house and lineage of David.*” Otherwise they’d never have gone. There was no other reason to go. Joseph didn’t seem to have any family in Bethlehem, otherwise they would have stayed with them when they were there. Any relatives must have either died out or, like him, left the area.

Both Joseph and Mary were quite happily living in Nazareth. They had just got married, and Mary was heavily pregnant with their firstborn child. But they were forced to go on a long journey. Bethlehem is about 150km south of Nazareth.

Mary wasn’t actually physically descended from David herself, but she was now part of Joseph’s household, so she had to go. She was actually cousin to Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who descended directly from the High Priestly line.

So, this is why Jesus Christ ended up being born in Bethlehem. And He had to be born there, because this had been prophesied by the prophet Micah, about 700 years previously:

Micah 5:2

*[2] But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

So this one-off taxation decreed from Rome, occurring at exactly the same time that Mary from Nazareth was due to give birth, was God’s providence in action, making sure the birth was in Bethlehem as it had been prophesied. God always works His providence, so He gets all the glory.

Later on, during Christ’s public ministry, thirty or so years later, nobody seemed to know that He had been born in Bethlehem. He was known as “Jesus of Nazareth,” which was a derogatory term because Nazareth was such a backwater. In fact, once, there was a division among the people about His birthplace, because the Christ was prophesied to come from Bethlehem, but many didn’t seem to know Jesus had been born there:

John 7:40-43

*[40] Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. [41] Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? [42] Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? [43] So there was a division among the people because of him.*

***[6] And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. [7] 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.***

There was no room in the inn. Nobody was willing to give up their place for a heavily pregnant woman. That's what people are like. By nature we're all self-centred, and can only think of ourselves and our own comforts. That's why we need a Saviour.

There's no mention of a stable in the Bible. Maybe they were in a cave or some other kind of shelter. Maybe they were in the open field, we don't know. But Mary did the best she could in the circumstances. She found some cloths to swaddle the child, and a manger to put Him in, not realising that these would be signs for the shepherds to look for later, v.12.

So, God becoming man, the Word becoming flesh, God Himself coming into this world, wasn't done in a great cathedral, or revealed to some great archbishop or pope. God chose to use a couple of ordinary young people from an obscure town, and some local shepherds to witness it. And when Christ chose His disciples, He chose mainly fishermen.

The religious leaders of the day completely missed their Messiah. God passed them all by. In fact the religious leaders of Christ's day ended up becoming His worst enemies, and they got Him put to death. And there is a lesson here too, for the great religious leaders of our day.

No sooner had the child been born, they then got a visit from some shepherds:

***[8] And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.***

Here's a group of shepherds nearby, "*abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*" So it's not winter, otherwise they'd be sheltered from the cold, not in the fields.

***[9] And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.***

These poor simple shepherds doing an ordinary night's work were suddenly awakened. Firstly, we're told "*the angel of the Lord came upon them.*"

And then "*the glory of the Lord shone round about them.*" In the Old Testament, "*the glory of the Lord*" appeared on Mount Sinai, in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple. Whenever "*the glory of the Lord*" appeared, men, like the shepherds, became "*sore afraid.*" And it's not surprising, because God is holy, and we're altogether sinful. Isaiah saw this:

Isaiah 6:5

*[5] Then said I Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

***[10] And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.***

When God appears to us, we fear, we tremble, because of our sin. But if God wants to show favour, and the prerogative is always with Him, He would say, "*Fear not,*" like here. Indeed, like Gabriel with Mary. There's only no need to fear if He's got good news for us,

and He has: *“I bring you good tidings of great joy.”* Not only to the shepherds but *“to all people.”* That includes us.

***[11] For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.***

That very day, in the city of David, that is Bethlehem, was born a Saviour *“Christ the Lord.”* For centuries, it had been prophesied a Saviour would come from God. These prophecies are throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. And a Saviour is exactly what we need, because none of us can save ourselves. Isaiah said:

Isaiah 53:6

*[6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

We can't hope to please God by anything we do, we're too self-centred. God, in His love and mercy, didn't leave us like that, but promised a Saviour who would come into the world, to save His people from their sins:

Matthew 1:21

*[21] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

1 Peter 3:18

*[18] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit....*

John 8:36

*[36] If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

That's why this is good tidings of great joy to all people. Because in Christ we can have our sins forgiven. In Him we can be set free from the punishment we deserve. No other religious figure can do this. But Christ can, because He is God come down to earth for us.

***[12] And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.***

And here's an unusual sign. They were told to look out for: a babe swaddled, so He was properly cared for, but He was lying in a manger, an animal drinking trough. Little did Mary know that what she had already done for the child would be the sign these shepherds would be looking for.

The angel didn't actually tell them to go, they could have stayed where they were and not bothered. But how could they not go, when such marvellous news had been revealed to them?

***[13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, [14] Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.***

In salvation, all the glory goes to God. We can't deserve it, we can't obtain it. It comes purely by the mercy of God. And we really ought to understand this. We must come to an end of ourselves, and realise salvation, deliverance from wrath to come, is all of the Lord.

And then we've got this phrase, "*on earth peace, good will toward men.*" But Christ said:

Luke 12:51

*[51] Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:*

The division Christ spoke of is the division that occurs naturally between men and men, because of Him. Some will believe in Him and be saved to eternal life, others won't.

The peace spoken of here is peace between God and men. Not all men, because some will never believe. But God sent Christ as a Saviour in an act of good will towards men. We can be reconciled to God today, if only we repent of our sins and come to Him:

John 3:17

*[17] For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

***[15] And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.***

So this great, glorious, heavenly visitation from the angels ends, and the shepherds are back on their own again. And they decided immediately to go to Bethlehem to see for themselves all these things the Lord had told them about.

The obvious question is, who looked after the sheep while they were gone? We always have to think of these silly questions. We don't know, is the answer. I'm sure the Lord kept them from straying too far, given these exceptional circumstances.

***[16] And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.***

They found Mary and Joseph and the babe in the manger just as the angel had told them. Which is why it probably wasn't in a stable. Mary was giving birth. If they could have had privacy, they'd have done so and shut the stable door. The shepherds would never have been able to find them then. We're told the shepherds "*came with haste,*" they were excited, so they weren't looking properly around every tree and in every outbuilding. Mary and Joseph were probably out in the open, maybe a cave, somewhere near the path the shepherds would have taken from their fields to Bethlehem, a place they would easily find, without really looking. There's another providence.

Mary must have been incredibly tired. She'd just arrived in Bethlehem after several days travel, only to find the inn full. She then went into labour and gave birth, at night, in the open, on the floor. She'd made the effort to swaddle the baby properly, I guess with a piece of cloth from her own clothing, cleaned the manger up as best she could, and placed the baby carefully in it. Then just as she's trying to get some sleep, these sweaty shepherds turn up. Under normal circumstances, she'd be pretty grumpy by now.

But the things of the Lord are wonderful. Who wants to sleep when such momentous events are taking place? And when we become a Christian, we're finished with our old life. The things of God, which meant nothing to us before, suddenly become exciting.

***[17] And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.***

The first thing the shepherds did after meeting this new young family, was they "*made known abroad*" what had happened. They went and told everybody they could about it. The Saviour has come. We can be reconciled to God through Him. The shepherds had just witnessed the beginning of the story.

***[18] And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.***

And "*all they that heard it wondered.*" This was one of the most successful evangelistic campaigns ever. Maybe the next day Mary had a lot more visitors to deal with. Maybe someone offered them a house, because we find them staying in Bethlehem when the wise men came later on.

***[19] But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.***

So much had happened. And Mary "*kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.*" What was she pondering? Why did God choose me? Do we ever think that? Why did God choose me, and not my unbelieving neighbour? We can ponder on that question for ever, because I'm no better than him, in fact I'm far worse.

And then she must have been pondering the works of God. The remarkable ways seemingly unrelated things came together in her life. We can ponder Scripture and see God's dealings with His people throughout history.

Nothing ever happens by chance. God works everything out in His providence. Mary was heavily pregnant, when she got a letter from the taxman telling her to report to the Bethlehem office by the date she was due. This seemed like a terrible problem for poor Mary. But in faith she undertook that journey. No matter how big the problems we face, they're never there by chance. The Lord is in control of everything.

Romans 8:28

*[28] And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

***[20] And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.***

How is it that the shepherds could be so joyful in their hearts in such a fallen world? Because they had confidence God was in control of it, so they had no need to worry about anything. But not only that, they knew that this child they had just seen was the Saviour of the world, the Christ, the Son of the living God. The one who was to say later:

John 10:10

*[10] I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

## **Mary's Purification**

Joseph and Mary were godly people. They loved the Lord. So they would want to please God by doing what the Mosaic Law commanded. Indeed they had to keep the Law in precise detail, because of who this child was:

Galatians 4:4,5

*[4] But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [5] To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

**Luke 2:21-39**

***[21] And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.***

So, firstly, they would have circumcised the child after eight days. This could be done locally, there was no need to visit the Temple for this. The child would be officially named at this point.

***[22] And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; [23] (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)***

Then after another thirty three days, they were obliged to go to the Temple for two things. Firstly, to present the child to the Lord, as He was a firstborn Son:

Exodus 13:2

*[2] Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*

***[24] And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.***

Then secondly, they had to go to the Temple with two turtle doves or two young pigeons, for Mary to be ceremonially purified:

Leviticus 12

*[1] And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, [2] Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. [3] And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. [4] And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. [5] But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. [6] And when the days of*

*her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: [7] Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. [8] And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.*

The fact that they went to the Temple, together with the fact that when the wise men visited a few months later they were living in an house, rather indicates that after the birth, they found proper accommodation in Bethlehem, rather than going all the way back to Nazareth, only to have to come back to the Temple in Jerusalem just a few weeks later. Bethlehem is only about 10km from Jerusalem, and a lot more convenient.

In the Temple, they met two other devout believers. Firstly, Simeon:

***[25] And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.***

Here, we find out five things about Simeon:

1. He was in Jerusalem. This was where the true religion was outwardly based. Of course, God is everywhere. So we're able to worship Him anywhere, wherever we are. Christ said:

John 4:23

*[23] ... true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth...*

God is not dependent upon a place to be worshipped, but He does have churches in this world, where his witness is. Simeon was in the right place, in the Temple, the outward, visible church of his day. And it was there that he got the blessing.

2. He was "just." The Bible tells us:

Matthew 5:6

*[6] Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Christianity is primarily concerned with morality:

1 John 5:19

*[19] And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

3. He was "devout." True religion was not just the first priority in his life. It was his life. He saw that everything else in this world was not worth living for. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived apart from Christ, concluded:

Ecclesiastes 1:14

*[14] I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Living for the Lord alone is the only thing worth living for. Everything else is emptiness.

4. He was also “*waiting for the consolation of Israel.*” He was waiting. Often, we don’t think that just waiting is very useful. We would rather be busy, busy, busy, doing something all the time. We get impatient with waiting. But waiting, or patience, is a virtue. It is a fruit of the Spirit. We are called to wait, like the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 1:9,10

*[9] For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; [10] And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

Simeon was waiting for “*the consolation of Israel.*” For centuries, God had promised that a Messiah, a Saviour, would come to save Israel. We have many references to this in the Old Testament.

5. And we see that “*The Holy Ghost was upon him.*” He was a godly man. He lived close to the Lord. And he was led by the Holy Spirit in all that he did.

In all these aspects, Simeon is indeed a wonderful example for us all to follow.

***[26] And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.***

The Holy Spirit had shown him that he wouldn’t die until he’d seen the promised Messiah for himself. He must have been an old man, otherwise this promise wouldn’t make sense. It would only make sense if his life had been prolonged beyond an average lifetime. We see that he was sensitive to the Holy Spirit, otherwise he would never have known this.

***[27] And he came by the Spirit into the Temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the Law,***

Moved by the Spirit on this particular day, he was told to go to the Temple. Now, this wasn’t just a sudden thought from nowhere. Simeon had spent a long time of patiently waiting. During this time, he made sure that he stayed close to the Lord. This wasn’t a sudden impulse to do something. But when the Holy Spirit did tell him to go to the Temple, he was ready to obey at a moment’s notice.

The Lord told him to go to the Temple. At the same time, in the Lord’s providence, Joseph and Mary arrived. And in the crowd at the Temple, in the Lord’s providence, they met.

***[28] Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, [29] Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.***

Simeon took the boy in his arms and praised God. He was now ready for his death. The promise of God had been fulfilled. He’d seen the Messiah just as the Lord had promised him. And he realised that his life’s work had now been completed, and was ready to die. He was happy and content to die. He knew his life’s work was over. Then he blessed the child:

***[30] For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, [31] which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, [32] A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.***

His own eyes had seen the salvation that the Lord had provided for His people. Centuries of prophecy had now come true. This was the highlight of his life, and he knew that it was such a privilege to be able to see the Lord's salvation for himself.

But Simeon also knew that this salvation was “*before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles.*” He was perfectly aware that the salvation God had provided was not just for Jews, but for Gentiles too. This was prophesied in the Scriptures:

Isaiah 49:22

*[22] Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.*

So we see that Simeon, the man of God, was not only close to the Lord, but he knew his Bible well. The two go together.

The church leaders in Israel, on the other hand, hated the idea of their Messiah being for Gentiles. They thought that they Jews were the one true people of God, and nobody else. They thought that they could get to heaven because they were born into the right family. Many people think that. It's very sad. We shouldn't put our trust in our family or church background, or in church leaders, but put our trust in the Lord alone.

***[33] And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.***

Joseph and Mary, being godly people themselves, understood the blessing Simeon pronounced on the child, and they marvelled. They knew Simeon to be a true believer like themselves, and they joyed in the fellowship they could have with one another.

Psalms 133:1

*[1] Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

But we can only dwell in unity if we have been truly changed in our hearts.

And they marvelled at the fact that this child was going to be the Saviour of the world, not just the Jews.

***[34] And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against,***

And then Simeon blesses them all, and gave Mary a prophecy. Mary would have accepted it, knowing that it came from Simeon, a true prophet of the Lord. But it wasn't happy news for her. She was told, firstly, that her Son would be “*set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be spoken against.*”

This Saviour would divide. Some will acknowledge Him as their Saviour, others would reject Him. This came true, as the Saviour Himself later said:

Luke 12:51-53

*[51] Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: [52] For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. [53] The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

Christ would cause division in the land. The world today is divided into two types of people. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved to eternal life, and those who aren't. True believers will be persecuted by those who do not believe. But Christ said:

John 16:33

*[33] In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

***[35] “(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.***

And the prophecy continued, telling Mary in particular that a sword would pierce her own soul too.

Mary would witness everything the world would do to Christ. He would be persecuted and put to death. Mary would be at the cross to see His death first hand. She would have all these trials to go through in this world.

But Simeon was not the only believer who was in the Temple at that time.

***[36] And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; [37] And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.***

There was Anna was also very old. She'd been married for 7 years and then her husband died and she became a widow. She was now 84 years old. Did she have children? We don't know.

How did she spend her time? We find out that she was “a prophetess,” and that she “departed not from the temple but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” What a life! Complete devotion to the things of God. Our lives should be like Anna's. After all, Christ is the only thing worth living for.

***[38] And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.***

As a result of such devotion, the Lord blessed her. At the very same time as Joseph, Mary and Simeon were all together in the Temple praising God for the child, Anna also turned up. The Lord also guided her through the Temple crowds to meet them. And she offered a prayer of thanksgiving.

And then what did she do afterwards? She “*spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” She told others about the Saviour. God had finally visited and redeemed His people. What a joyful message we all have to tell others about. Paul said:

Romans 1:16

*[16] I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

There seems to have been plenty of other godly people in Jerusalem. Anna knew many who also “*looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” But they weren’t the important people. They were the quiet, unknown people in the land. We don’t know who they are. But one day we’ll meet them all in glory, and be praising God with them for evermore.

***[39] And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.***

Upon first reading, we could think that immediately after Mary’s purification, they went straight back to Nazareth. But Matthew clearly indicates that more took place before they returned. They get a visit from some wise men, then they had to escape quickly to Egypt, only returning after Herod had died. This could have taken anything up to two years before finally going back to Nazareth and settling there.

### ***Flight to Egypt***

Probably a month or two after Mary’s purification, some foreigners arrive in Jerusalem:

### **Matthew 2**

***[1] Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem***

Who were these “*wise men*”? Some Bible translations use the word “Magi,” but that’s not a real word in English at all. It’s a transliteration from the Greek “*magos*,” and it’s where we get our word “magician” from. It could mean one who practices magic, but it could equally mean a doctor or a wise man. Christians should by all means be wise men:

Proverbs 4:7

*[7] Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*

Proverbs 9:10

*[10] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

But Christians should never have anything to do with magic. We’re told that, with others:

Revelation 21:8

*[8] ...sorcerers.... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

Some people suggest that the wise men were astrologers, and they get that from the fact that they saw a star. They saw one star and it's assumed they were experts in these matters. But that can't be true. Anyone who gets involved with witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, fortune-telling and the like, will never come to the truth by practising those things. In fact, the more they practise their evil arts, the darker their minds will become.

However, unbelieving kings won't be able to tell the difference between a truly wise man and an evil magician. So, when a king chose his closest advisers, it would be a mixture of magicians, astrologers, fortune-tellers and other people whom Christians should have nothing to do with, together with truly wise men, such as, for example, Daniel. In Daniel's day, the king had a dream and needed help in understanding it:

Daniel 2:2

*[2] Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams.*

These were all the king's closest advisers. Not just evil men, such as magicians and astrologers, but also truly wise men, of whom Daniel himself was one. In Daniel 5:11 he's actually called the "*master of the magicians.*" Think of these wise men as a bit like Daniel. They were probably close advisers to the king of the land they came from, but weren't kings themselves. They would've probably had access to libraries and colleges there.

And they came from the East. We're not told exactly which country. Neither are we told how many there were. So they weren't kings, and there weren't necessarily three of them. We know of three gifts, but that doesn't necessarily mean three people. Tradition says they were from Persia. They could be Persian, but they could also have been Babylonian. They could've been Indian or Chinese, we don't know. All we know is they came from somewhere east of Jerusalem. So they weren't European or African.

***[2] Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.***

They come to Jerusalem with a question. "*Where is He that is born king of the Jews?*" They knew a child had recently been born who was "*King of the Jews.*" How did they know that? And why did they find a Jewish King so important, that they travelled a long distance across desert just to see Him for a few hours and give Him such expensive gifts?

Like all of us, they would've been born and brought up in the religion of their country. But in their search for wisdom, having access to the libraries of the land, they must've come across something that changed their lives completely. The Bible says about itself:

Hebrews 4:12

*[12] For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

They must have come across some part of Holy Scripture. Only the Word of God can change lives like that. Ordinary literature can't change hearts. It might move people emotionally, but it can't change hearts. Only Holy Scripture has the power to change hearts, because it's living and powerful. When they came across a part of Scripture, they realised it wasn't like any other literature they'd read. It stopped them in their tracks and changed their lives forever. They realised it was the truth, renounced the religion of their fathers, and came to trust in the one true living God, Lord of heaven and earth instead.

They found out that a Jew was going to be born who was going to be a Saviour, one which had been prophesied throughout the ages. They also knew the time of the birth was imminent. And they also knew that this Holy Person would be a Saviour not just for Jews but for Gentiles (i.e. themselves) also.

There's one book in the Old Testament that contains all that information. And that's the book of Daniel. That's the book they probably came across in one of their libraries. Daniel spent his life in exile in Babylon. Babylon was subsequently taken over by the Persian Empire. So it wouldn't have been unusual for a copy of the book of Daniel to have found its way into a library in that part of the world, where the wise men would've found it.

They couldn't have had access to all the Scriptures though, because they didn't have the book of Micah. Micah would've told them the exact place of Christ's birth, Bethlehem. But they didn't have that information when they set out on their journey. They just headed for the land of Judah, and it's main city, Jerusalem. Micah was a prophet in Israel, so there wouldn't necessarily have been copies of his book available in the East.

The book of Daniel had shewed them that the time for the birth of the Saviour was near. So when a peculiar star appeared in the sky, they knew it was a sign from God that this event had just taken place.

So they set off towards Jerusalem. It was going to be a long journey, of maybe several months, only to see a baby for a few hours, but their lives had been changed. Living for the things of God was now their only love.

They assumed Jerusalem would be full of people who were just as excited as they were at the coming of the Saviour. So they start asking everybody around, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" But they were wrong. They thought there'd be no problem finding Him, just by asking. But nobody knew anything at all about a Saviour. But word got to Herod that some foreigners were asking about another king instead of himself.

***[3] When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.***

Herod got annoyed. He thought he was king of the Jews. Some foreigners coming, saying another king had just been born, disturbed him. And if Herod was disturbed, the rest of Jerusalem would be too, because he was crazy and nobody knew what he'd do next.

***[4] And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.***

Herod tried to find out more information about this other king. So he "*demanded*" an answer from his religious advisers, the "*chief priests and scribes.*" He particularly wanted

to know “**where** Christ should be born.” So he must have sort of vaguely known about a “Christ” who was going to come sometime, but he didn’t know when or where, and wasn’t really interested. But the wise men arriving in the city prompted him to do something about it. He asked his religious advisers where His birth was prophesied to be, so he could quickly get rid of Him. Herod’s advisers knew exactly:

***[5] And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, [6] And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.***

We’ve come across this quote before from the book of Micah (5:2), the book the wise men didn’t have. It’s amazing that the wise men only had the book of Daniel, and their lives were completely changed by it. The chief priests and teachers of the law had the whole of the Old Testament freely available to them. And they knew it very well. They knew exactly where to find this prophecy about the Saviour’s birthplace. The Old Testament included the book of Daniel, so they ought to have known that the time for the Saviour’s coming was near. But it didn’t bother them. They didn’t want to know. They’d got no heart to go looking for Christ. No interest in spiritual things. They were quite happy to be church leaders, with people looking up to them. But they had no time for God. It’s amazing that Scripture can change some people’s hearts forever, like the wise men. But others can read it, know it backwards, but be totally unmoved.

***[7] Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.***

So, Herod called these foreigners to see him secretly. He didn’t want anyone to know he needed anything, like information or advice. He asked them of the precise time when the star had appeared, They’d obviously told him about the star. The wise men innocently gave him this information. They’d no reason not to.

***[8] And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.***

So Herod has got his missing information, the **time** of the birth, from the wise men, and the wise men got their missing information, the **place** of the birth, from the most unlikely source - King Herod himself. Herod told them to go to Bethlehem, and come back afterwards to tell him the address where the baby could be found, so he could worship him too. But that was a lie. He’d got no intention of worshipping. He wanted to kill Him. He wanted to be the only “king of the Jews.” The wise men had no idea how evil he was.

Herod had lied to them, and only told them what he wanted to. That’s what the people of this world are like all the time. They think nothing of lying to people and cheating them for their own ends. But Christians shouldn’t be like that. The wise men were genuine with Herod, even though Herod wasn’t genuine with them. Being genuine is the Christian way to deal with everybody. Of course, we should also be fully aware that as a result of our behaving like this, people will think we’re simple, or a bit stupid, and try to use us.

Matthew 10:16

*[16] Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*

***[9] When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.***

Now, the star reappeared. Why didn't God just keep the star in the sky all the time, for them to follow from their homeland all the way to the house where the child was? If He'd done that, the wise men would never have gone to Jerusalem. And they'd never have met Herod. God chose to do it the way He did. Our job is to simply follow the Lord every step of the way. God wanted them to go to Jerusalem first. Otherwise nobody in Jerusalem would have even been aware of the birth of a Saviour. Their own church leaders weren't telling them. And God wanted them to encounter Herod, as a testimony against him.

***[10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.***

They were overjoyed at seeing the star again. Which implies they must've missed it, they can't have seen it on their long journey. They didn't follow the star, as is commonly thought. During their journey, do you think doubts may have come into their minds? Were they thinking perhaps, "We've not seen the star now for weeks. Maybe what we read about a Saviour wasn't true after all." We don't know what they were thinking, but they carried on nevertheless, until they reached Jerusalem. When God doesn't seem to be there any more, do we still remain faithful? We should, because He is always there in the Christian, whether we feel it or not:

Hebrews 13:5

*[5] ...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

This time the star moved. It went ahead of them from Jerusalem, the 10km south to Bethlehem, and stopped over where Christ was. The wise men knew that the star was the same one they saw in the east, yet somehow now, it was more local. It moved, and led them to the very place, the very house, where the Saviour was.

***[11] And when they were 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 unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.***

Mary and Joseph were now living in an house in Bethlehem. When the wise men saw the child, they knew to fall down and worship Him. But we're never to worship another human being or angel. It's against the First Commandment:

Exodus 20:3

*[3] Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

Whenever men have tried to worship creatures, they've always been rebuked. Like John:

Revelation 19:10

*[10] And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God.*

But when people tried to worship Jesus Christ, He never stopped them. He allowed them to worship Him and never rebuked them. That's because He is God. He alone is worthy of worship, which no man or angel ever could be. Mary knew that and didn't stop them here.

And the wise men left their gifts. Gold, frankincense and myrrh. If we read commentaries, we can read about how gold represents a king, frankincense represents a priest and myrrh, for some reason, represents a prophet, so Christ is prophet, priest and king in one Person. And that's all very interesting. But we really only need to understand these gifts for their costliness. Christ is worthy of worship, and He is worthy of the most lavish of gifts. He meant so much to these wise men, they gave such costly gifts to Him.

***[12] And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.***

God gave them a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod but to go home another way. They obeyed God. They weren't scared of Herod, or afraid of him. They just did what God had told them. But there would be trouble from Herod soon enough.

***[13] And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.***

And at the same time, Joseph had a dream too, from the angel of the Lord again. The same angel that spoke to him before, telling him that Mary would conceive. God told him to flee to Egypt because Herod was wanting to find and kill the child.

***[14] When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: [15] And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.***

Joseph and Mary fled with the child to Egypt, as God had directed them. That fulfilled another prophecy. One from the prophet Hosea, over 700 years before. Christ was to come, just like the Israelites, out of Egypt:

Hosea 11:1

*[1] When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.*

So the wise men go home to their land in the East, and Joseph and Mary flee with the child into Egypt in the West. All at God's direction. They will never meet physically in this world again. All knew the Lord. And when we have to part, maybe for good, from some of our Christian friends, we know we'll see them again in heaven, in the next life, and wherever the Lord sends us, we will always have Him with us, and meet His people as we need them. But:

Isaiah 57:20,21

*But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

***[16] Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. [17] Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, [18] In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.***

Whose fault was this slaughter? Was it the wise men's? They didn't go back to tell Herod where Christ was. But God had told them not to. So, was it God's fault? We're all too keen to blame God for everything that doesn't go the way we want. Neither of these were to blame. Herod did it. He's the only one who should be blamed for such a wicked act.

The wise men couldn't have possibly known that their telling Herod the time the star appeared, and their not going back, would lead directly to the killing of all those children. Sometimes we're too sensitive about what we say or what we do or don't do. We can so easily blame ourselves for all sorts of things, which aren't our fault. Our job is to be genuine, to tell the truth, to do what the Lord tells us, and leave everything else for the Lord to sort out.

Herod's slaughter did actually fulfil another prophecy, one of Jeremiah, about 600 years before:

Jeremiah 31:15

*[15] Thus saith the Lord ; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.*

Herod hadn't a clue that his evil work has actually fulfilled a prophecy given by the Lord centuries earlier. The fulfilment of prophecy is sure proof of God's control over all things. Prophecy can only be fulfilled if God is ordering everything. Nothing is outside of His control. Satan and evil men can do nothing unless the Lord ordains it to come to pass in the first place. And God will only ever work things for our good in the end:

Romans 8:28

*[28] And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

So, was it God's fault then, for allowing Herod to do this? The most important thing we need to understand is that death is not the end. God knows what He's doing allowing these children to have their lives in this world cut short. Things weren't out of control.

Those children Herod killed, didn't live long in this evil world, but they were still sinners in need of a Saviour. The usual way the Lord works to save sinners is through the gospel. Anyone who repents and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved from the consequences of their sins. But, infants don't have the capacity to understand that. So does that mean they all go to hell then? No, we can't say that either. God is a merciful God. God can always operate over and above His usual means. The fact is, we don't know what happens to every infant dying in infancy. So we shouldn't speculate.

We think it sad that those poor children didn't have the chance to live a full life like we think we've got. And as long as we see death as the end, we'll always have a problem with the question of why God does things the way He does. Death is not the end. It's only the beginning of eternity. Far from those poor children being in a worse position than us, they're actually in a far better position. They were only in this world for a short time. Their tally of sins is far less than ours, who sin more and more every day that we're still alive on this earth. Far better to be in heaven with Christ than down here:

Isaiah 57:1

*[1] The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.*

Philippians 1:21-23

*[21] For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. [22] But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. [23] For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better*

But then, after a while in Egypt, Joseph has another dream:

***[19] But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, [20] Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.***

This could have been anything up to two years after they had to flee. Joseph was told "**they** are dead which sought the young child's life." So, it was more than Herod after them, maybe his whole family. But, God reassured him it was now safe to go back to Israel. So Joseph obeyed:

***[21] And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.***

But he was concerned, because one of Herod's sons still reigned in Judea:

***[22] But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:***

He had presumably planned to stay in Judea, for the family to return to their house in Bethlehem, until he realised who was in charge. God had specifically told him that **all** those who sought the child's life were now dead, so Archelaus can't have been one of them who wanted to kill Him. But God used this situation to fulfil another prophecy. Because Joseph wasn't comfortable going back to live in Judea as he'd planned, God gave him another dream, telling him to go to Galilee:

***[23] And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.***

If we just read Matthew's gospel, we'd think Nazareth was a place they'd never been to before, but that's where they came from. In Luke 2:39, it's called "*their own city.*" Gabriel visited Mary there, and they had only gone to Judea in the first place for the taxation.

We're told here "*the prophets*" had said: "*He shall be called a Nazarene.*" Where is that in Scripture? It isn't. So how can we understand this? Several ways have been suggested:

(1.) It was an extra-scriptural prophecy. Well, there were such, but for a God not to put such an important prophecy in the canon of Scripture would be very unlikely.

(2.) When Isaiah speaks of "*the Branch,*" the Hebrew word is "*Netzer*":

Isaiah 11:1

*[1] And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots....*

Just because a word has an N a Z and a T in it, doesn't mean it refers to Nazareth. Isaiah wasn't prophesying the Saviour would come from Nazareth, but from the line of David.

(3.) It means "*Nazarite,*" a person who makes a special vow to the Lord, as in Numbers 6:

Numbers 6:2

*[2] Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD....*

But Christ wasn't a Nazarite. Otherwise He'd have long hair, like Samson, which we've got no evidence for, despite old European paintings. And, as a Nazarite, He wouldn't have been allowed to drink alcohol, which we know He did, because His critics called Him a "*winebibber,*" which He wasn't, but this derogatory remark wouldn't make sense if He didn't drink wine at all:

Luke 7:34

*[34] The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*

(4.) This only leaves one other option, which I suggest is the correct one. We've already seen that Nazareth was known as a particularly despised, contemptible place. And Christ was prophesied by several prophets as despised by men:

Isaiah 53:2,3

*[2] ....he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. [3] He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Psalms 69:8,9

*[8] I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. [9] For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*

Psalms 22:6

*[6] But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

This holy child had changed the wise men permanently, after they came to understand Him and what He came into the world for. But this glorious Saviour, was also despised by the world. The world hated Him so much, they put Him to death. And men hate Him today. But His death fully atones for the sins of all those, like the wise men, who put their trust in Him.

From this verse, for Jesus to be called a “Nazarene,” or derogatorily “*Jesus of Nazareth*,” we can conclude that the family then settled in Nazareth for the rest of their lives. And Joseph became a carpenter.

### **Christ in the Temple at Age Twelve**

Jesus Christ was fully human, but He was sinless:

John 8:46

*[46] Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?*

2 Corinthians 5:21

*[21] For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Hebrews 4:15

*[15] For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

1 Peter 1:19

*[19] But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*

1 Peter 2:22

*[22] Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*

1 John 3:5

*[5] And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

Hebrews 7:26

*[26] For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*

This made Him altogether different from any other person. So His childhood must have been very difficult, because He couldn't have joined in with much of what the other children around Him were doing.

When He was born, as a baby, He wouldn't have been throwing tantrums like other children. Mary and Joseph would have had a relatively easy time with Him. They must have had quite a shock when His other brothers and sisters came along later on.

As He was growing up with His siblings, and other children in Nazareth, He would have been totally different from them. He would have been kind to them. He would have helped Mary and Joseph in bringing His other siblings up. But He wouldn't have gone about with the other boys pulling the legs off spiders, stealing apples and rolling around in the mud. Later on, as a teenager, He wouldn't have been getting drunk and snogging the girls, like all the other youths of His age were doing. He would have been seen as odd, different, not "normal." What we might call today, autistic. Not really mixing with the others, doing what they wanted to do. He could never have approved of most of what the other children were doing. He would have been kind to them all, but at the same time not accepted by them, and therefore very lonely and isolated.

We are told about Him during this time, that:

Luke 2:40

*[40] And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.*

That's not an ordinary child.

One incident, aged twelve, is recorded in Scripture:

**Luke 2:41,42**

***[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.***

Joseph and His mother were devout believers. They went up to Jerusalem at Passover every year. In fact, Joseph would probably have gone up to Jerusalem three times a year for the major festivals, as devout men were obliged to do.

As Jesus was twelve years old at this point, there would have been some other siblings travelling with them in the party. This, maybe together with others from Nazareth, made a company large enough for Jesus' absence not to be noticed:

**Luke 2:43,44**

***[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.***

So, He wasn't an aggressive child, wanting to be noticed, seeking attention all the time. He would easily have blended in with the background. In fact, He blended in so much, that they went a whole day's journey before they realised He was missing. So the family had to turn back:

**Luke 2:45**

***[45] And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.***

And they couldn't find Him for three days. Where had they been looking? They must have been worried about Him. The other siblings must have been very annoyed, and would have hated Him for causing so much trouble. None of them thought about looking in the Temple:

**Luke 2:46,47**

***[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.***

What "normal" kid would make a beeline for the Temple to start having theological debates with the doctors? He was weird. That's what all the other siblings would have been thinking. But Mary and Joseph at least, were about to be taught a lesson here:

**Luke 2:48**

***[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.***

Mary and Joseph were sorrowing that they'd lost Him. They were worried. They should have known better, knowing who He was. But, in the business of having a large family, they had stupidly thought that He had been naughty like all the others, and maybe run away. But He hadn't:

**Luke 2:49,50**

***[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.***

At this point they didn't understand His words, but would understand later. He had gone to visit His Father. His real Father. In the business of everything, Mary and Joseph had spoken of Joseph as being His father, just as he was the father of all the other siblings.

**Luke 2:51**

***[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.***

Christ obeyed his earthy parents and went back to Nazareth with them, and was subject to them. That must have been difficult at times. Joseph was a godly man, so would have tried to have done everything rightly, but he was still a sinner and was capable of making mistakes. Christ wasn't. Everything Christ said and did would have been right. Yet, we are told here that "*He was subject to them.*"

Mary thought on all these things, pondering them in her heart. She realised more and more who He was, and that He was going to be completely different from everybody else.

**Family and Neighbours During His Public Ministry**

Now, let's come to Christ's public ministry, and see what we can glean about His childhood and youth from this.

Joseph had trained Him up as a carpenter, but one day, He had to leave His carpenter's business, maybe in the hands of other siblings, because Joseph died. During the whole of Christ's public ministry there is no more reference to Joseph, so we must assume He had died. And his death brought about a change in circumstances.

Christ started His public ministry at the age of about thirty:

Luke 3:23

*[23] And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli*

Joseph's death meant that Jesus, the adopted firstborn Son of Joseph, now ascended the throne of Judah. He became the "King of the Jews," albeit the monarchy had long since disappeared. His accession to this "throne" was the signal for Him to go to a priest for baptism. He went to John the Baptist, who was a legitimate priest, descended directly from the line of Aaron through both his parents:

Luke 1:5

*[5] There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.*

But John was not trained in the Temple, like all the others from a priestly family. Guided by God, he went into the wilderness of Judea and set up his own ministry there instead. And this is where the Lord chose to go for His baptism. John was directly descended from Aaron, and Christ was the lawful King of the Jews. These facts were unrecognised by everybody around, nevertheless, this was a perfectly valid baptism in the eyes of the Law of God.

Christ deliberately chose to perform the whole of His public ministry in a quite lawful way, but separate from official channels. In fact the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Sanhedrin, the outward religious leaders of His day, became His worst enemies, not least because they were all hypocrites.

After Christ's baptism, and His return from forty days in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil, we discover Him attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee. This was a village about two kilometres outside of Nazareth:

John 2:1-2,11

*[1] And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and **the mother of Jesus was there:** [2] **And both Jesus was called, and his disciples,** to the marriage.... [11] *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.**

We are told that Mary was there. We are not told His siblings were there, but these things are usually family occasions, so it was likely that they were. We are told that His disciples were there. We're not told how many disciples. In the narrative they haven't officially been chosen yet, but all of them would have been at the baptism of John at some point. We know this, because when they were choosing a replacement for Judas later on, one of the criteria for being an apostle was that they had to have been with Christ from the baptism of John:

Acts 1:21,22

*[21] Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] **Beginning from the baptism of John**, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

And it was here, in Cana, that Christ performed His first miracle, turning water into wine. So, clearly, the fact that we're told this was the "*beginning of miracles*," means that He didn't perform any miracles before this, contrary to some fanciful ideas that people have had about Him. And we are told that as a result of this, His first miracle, his disciples believed on Him.

After this, we are told that He, His mother, His brethren and His disciples all went to Capernaum:

John 2:12

*[12] After this **he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.***

Christ was to make His base there, and His disciples settled there with Him. He was going to call mainly fishermen to be His disciples, so it was a logical place to locate, by the Sea of Galilee. But why His mother and brethren went as well, we don't really know.

Maybe, as Jesus their elder brother was going to be starting His new ministry there, they thought that they would all go together. After all, if He could perform miracles, they may have thought it would have been an easier life following Him than going back to the carpenter's shop in Nazareth. We don't really know why they moved to Capernaum with Him at all.

But we do know that they didn't stay long. Maybe they realised it was a big mistake to move, for whatever reason. The fact is that, underneath everything, His brethren had always thought their eldest brother was weird. Maybe, the crowds started to appear, and they couldn't cope with it. We don't really know why they left Capernaum, but presumably they returned to Nazareth.

We may have some inkling of why they left from a later incident:

Mark 3:20,21

*[20] And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. [21] And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.*

Christ is again surrounded by a crowd of people, and we are told His “*friends*” tried to lay hold on Him, saying “*He is beside Himself.*” Who are these “*friends*”? In Greek, the word is simply “*para,*” which is simply the word for “*beside.*” It’s not a noun at all, so it just means those “*beside*” Him. That is, those close to Him, His relatives and neighbours. They try to take Him away, saying “*He is beside Himself,*” or “*He is out of His mind.*”

This is a serious accusation, but these people, relatives and neighbours, those who grew up with Him, which would have included His brethren, thought He was mad. The fact that crowds were gathering around Him disturbed them. It just may be that that’s why they left Capernaum.

We don’t know for sure where this incident took place, but soon after we read:

Mark 3:31-35

*[31] There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. [32] And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. [33] And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? [34] And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! [35] For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.*

Here, there is another crowd, and His mother and brethren are there calling Him. Christ ignores them and says that all those who do the will of God are His true brethren, sisters and mother. So, His family clearly wanted Him to stop His ministry. Things were, to them, getting out of hand.

Mark doesn't tell us where this took place exactly either, but the fact that His neighbours and family from Nazareth are all there, implies that it took place near there. There are parallel passages in other gospels:

Matthew 12:46-50

*[46] While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. [47] Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. [48] But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? [49] And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! [50] For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

Luke 8:19-21

*[19] Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. [20] And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. [21] And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.*

And then, there is another incident, which we know definitely took place in Nazareth, because Christ is preaching in the synagogue there. The same synagogue He grew up in. And they are all “*offended in Him*”:

Matthew 13:54-58

*[54] And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? [55] Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? [56] And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? [57] And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. [58] And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

Mark 6:1-5

*[1] And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. [2] And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? [3] Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. [4] But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. [5] And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.*

So, His family (other than Mary), and those He grew up with in Nazareth, all reject Him. If as adults they are doing this, what would they have been like as children. He surely must have been bullied, simply for not being like them.

And then, we have one final incident to look at. Christ's brethren rebuke Him for not going to Jerusalem for the Passover (although He went later):

John 7:1-6,10

*[1] After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. [2] Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. [3] His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. [4] For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. [5] For neither did his brethren believe in him. [6] Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready..... [10] But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

He was going to go to Jerusalem in His own good time, but they were teasing Him, bullying Him into going sooner than He'd planned, after all, the men of the household ought to go to Jerusalem three times a year, or they break the Mosaic Law, so, why aren't you going? That's what they would be telling Him.

And we are told here that they simply did not believe in Him.

That is the family that Jesus grew up with. He must have had a hard time, even though He would always have been kind back to them.

Multiple times in His public ministry, Christ taught that the world hated Him:

John 3:19,20

*[19] And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [20] For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

John 7:7

*[7] The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*

John 15:18

*[18] If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

John 15:25

*[25] But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.*

In fact, the world hated Him so much that within about three and a half years of starting His public, teaching ministry, He was put to death.

Before He began His public ministry, He would not have been teaching, but He would still have been living a life that was so different from everybody else around Him. Joseph and Mary, as godly people, would have supported and protected Him, and He would have been kind to everyone, but, even so, most people would have hated Him, simply because He was not like them.

And we, His followers, are told that we also will be hated by the world:

Matthew 10:22

*[22] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

Matthew 24:9

*[9] Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

Mark 13:13

*[13] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

Luke 21:17

*[17] And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.*

John 17:14

*[14] I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

And we are warned that we may even have to forsake our own family members:

Matthew 19:29

*[29] And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

Mark 10:29,30

*[29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

Luke 18:29,30

*[29] And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, [30] Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

And we are warned that even our own family members may even want to put us to death:

Luke 21:16

*[16] And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.*

And we are called to live a Christian life, and not to hide it. Christ must always take precedent over our physical family members, and indeed over our own lives also:

Luke 14:26

*[26] If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

We can expect no different from what Christ experienced Himself from the hands of sinful men.

There are two other references to “brethren” after His resurrection:

Firstly, an angel speaks to Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses:

Matthew 28:7-10

*[7] And go quickly, and **tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee;** there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. [8] And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. [9] And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. [10] Then said Jesus unto them, **Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee,** and there shall they see me.*

The angel tells them to tell the disciples that Christ is risen from the dead, and to go to Galilee, where they will see Him. Soon after, they then meet Jesus Himself in His

resurrection body, who tells them “*go tell **my brethren** that they go into Galilee,*” where they would see Him.

This “*brethren*” could just be a general word for His believers, after all, we are all His brethren:

Matthew 23:8

*[8] ....one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*

But it could also be a specific call to His unbelieving siblings to go.

A second reference is an incident when the risen Jesus speaks to Mary Magdalene when she is on her own:

John 20:17

*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but **go to my brethren**, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*

Again, this “*brethren*” could be just a general word for His believers, but it could also be a specific word to tell His physical brethren that He had been risen from the dead.

Maybe, just maybe, they believed this, and they did go to Galilee, and they did see Him, because we find later, that immediately after the ascension, His brethren are found with Mary and the disciples in a prayer meeting:

Acts 1:12-14

*Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, **and with his brethren.***

This is all we can glean from the Scriptures about the first thirty years of Christ's life, before He started His public ministry.

We are called to follow Him. He is our Saviour, but He is also our example. His life was a life of suffering in this world. We can expect no better:

1 Peter 2:21

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*