

“The Child”

Matthew 2

We've been looking at the various names and titles used for Jesus at the time of His birth. Today we look at the most repeated word used to identify Jesus. Nine times in Matt. 2 we hear Jesus referred to simply as 'the child', 10 times if you count Matt. 1:20. Five of these references come directly from an angel's mouth, which means this is how God wanted to refer to Jesus here.

Since the God's Word is clearly directed by the Holy Spirit moving men of God to record these words, I do not think it is something to gloss over. What do we learn from hearing God refer to Jesus as 'the Child' numerous times? Let's think of this in the overall plan of God for Jesus' earthly life from

Heb. 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”

“Since the children have flesh ...” - that's us - “He too shared in their humanity” referring to Jesus. Most of what we know about Jesus is His last 3 years. But He was a baby and a small child, a kid, a teenager and then a young man. The Greek word for Child is 'paideon', the root for pediatric. Paideon is occasionally used to describe a baby, but most often it refers to a young child. Here Joseph and Mary are in a house, away from the original birthplace. The magi are looking for one 'who has been born'. Herod's edict refers to boys two and under based on the timing of when the star appeared.

Jesus was a child and God refers to Him as 'the child' numerous times. Why call him 'the child' and not by His name Jesus? Because God wants us to be able to relate more to Jesus and Joseph and Mary. One reason why Jesus' youth is mentioned, I believe is so that He can identify with us more.

Jesus Became a Child so He Can Sympathize With Us (2:1-6; Phil. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:14-16)

We've all been children and have children or grandchildren or will someday. So Jesus has been through childhood as we have. He can relate to us. He deliberately chose to become one of us, even as a baby and child.

Phil. 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

- ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
- ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
- ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death

He humbled Himself to be dependent on others. That's an attitude we all need to work on. The most powerful, intelligent being in the world intentionally was dependent and obedient to parents, elders and society. Humility does not come naturally for us thanks to our sin nature. Now we are new creations in Christ so humility, dependence, obedience and servanthood are qualities God wants to

see in us. He 'became obedient' doesn't mean He disobeyed at times but rather that He grew so much in servanthood and obedience that He obeyed His Father even to death, death on a cross.

The author of Hebrews wrote in Heb. 4:14

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

“Therefore” refers to something connected just prior. In Heb. 4 the author is encouraging believers going through suffering for the gospel to hang in there and remain obedient to God, waiting and looking forward to the future rest that is there for us. That will require humbling ourselves at times, submitting to God's purposes and obeying His Word. Listen to what he wrote in 4:9-13,

⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

God knows our hearts. His Word exposes the sinful attitudes of independence, rebellion, retaliation and disobedience. Knowing Jesus humbled Himself even from infancy and childhood makes Him relatable and all the more accessible when we are struggling with those who persecute us or struggling with humility against arrogance and refusing to be dependent on other believers. Jesus learned all that and sympathizes with us in our spiritual weakness to obey and respond biblically without sinning. So when we need mercy and grace to help us be humble, dependent and obedient, He can help us in our time of need for these things.

What else can we learn about Jesus 'the child'? As parents we've all wrestled with the question, 'Should I bring children into the world today? It's such a terrible place.' But Matt. 2 helps us not to be afraid to bring up children in the days we live because

God Sent Jesus into a Hostile World to Encourage Us as Parents (2:7-8, 13-18)

When the magi showed up in Jerusalem asking

Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

We read that Herod was 'disturbed and all Jerusalem with him.' Herod was a usurper. No one had been called king of the Jews since Jehoiachin, 591 years prior when Nebuchadnezzar dethroned him and Israel no longer had independent self-government. Herod was not a son of David. He wasn't even Jewish; he was an Edomite. When the Magi asked where is the one who had been born king of the Jews, this was drop the mic, earth-shattering announcement saying where is the real king? Herod already had killed a couple of sons and others who he felt were a threat to his throne. So no

wonder he was disturbed and the people of Jerusalem also. 'Disturbed' means troubled; to stir up a riot'. He's going to blow a gasket! Herod's rule showed that the culture Jesus was brought up in a culture

Hostile to truth (vv.3-8)

The news the Magi shared was true; Israel was awaiting the promised Messiah, the true king of Israel. Herod wanted no part of truth which is why he lied to the Magi about wanting to worship Him. The chief priests and teachers of the law knew where it said in Scripture the Messiah would come from but showed no interest in the truth since they made no attempt to see for themselves. The prophecy said He would rule and shepherd God's people Israel. But there was little interest in His rule. 'We like things the way they are' because Herod allowed them to look after things their way so long as it didn't interfere with him or disturb Rome.

That's no different than today. Christianity or faith in Jesus is tolerated as long as it doesn't rattle anyone's cages or cause them to change how they live. But suggest that Jesus is the rightful ruler of the world and that we will be accountable to Him one day, watch the responses! Not much has changed. God brought Jesus into a world that was hostile to encourage us by saying, 'Don't worry. You can do this. We need more believers in the truth. What better way to influence the world for truth by raising up our kids to be the messengers of truth to their generation.

Joseph, Mary and the child had to flee to Egypt because of Herod's hostility, but God protected them. When we're worried about our own kids/grandkids facing a world hostile to truth, who we want to shape with the truth, we can pray to Jesus about our concerns because He lived it Himself.

It was also a world

Hostile to cultural expectations (Matt. 1:18-21; Luke 2:6-7)

Back up the story a little to Ch. 1 that before the angel visit Joseph was going to divorce Mary but quietly so as not to shame her. Joseph and Mary lived in a culture that would shame an unwed mother because she didn't live up to their standards.

So often we skim over Luke 2:4-7 without thinking about the family culture. Let's review:

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The word "inn" is unfortunate. The word means guest room not a public inn like a boarding house or motel. Typically most people had homes with two rooms. The main room was elevated from a lower separate room which was where the animals were brought in for the night. It could double as a guest room, but it was more for the animals, the manger being a hollowed-out hole or a mortared stone box for water. The real guest room was often the roof.

Joseph and Mary were descendants of David. Bethlehem is the town of David; his birthplace and Joseph's apparently also. There would have been no shortage of family to have stayed with, but no one made room for them because Mary was pregnant before the wedding. Somebody thankfully

said they could stay where animals stay. A dirty unhealthy environment, a waiting cesspool for infection to a woman about to give birth.

But God met their needs. God got them through it. Jesus survived and grew up in a culture that mostly was not open to His words even though they were God's words. Has anything changed for us? Shaming has taken on different forms today. People may not throw rocks but instead they plaster words on social media, twisting them to show how anti-cultural they are. We are not welcome here. But that's okay. Jesus knows. He understands, He relates. He sympathizes with us.

What else can we learn from references to Jesus as 'the child'? Here's something else that will encourage us:

God Entrusted His Son to Godly Imperfect Parents **(1:24-25; 2:13-15, 19-23)**

God sent His Son into the world leaving Him in the hands of fallible human beings. And He was okay with that. If we ever feel overwhelmed and underprepared to parent and disciple our children today, how would you feel if you were Joseph and Mary looking after the Son of God? No pressure there! But God knew what He was doing. Mary had found favour with God because she was willing to be the Mother of the Messiah. Someone had to be the one. And Jesus would need someone faithful and trustworthy to be the father to God's Son, to direct Him and shape Him with the truth. God chose Joseph. We see Joseph's compassion in not willing to shame Mary. And then Joseph's self-denial and willingness to remain celibate until after Jesus was born.

And in Matt. 2 Joseph responds immediately to God's words of warning through an angel.

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod.

Get up

Take the child & his mother

Escape to Egypt

Stay there until I tell you

He got up

he took the child & his mother
and left for Egypt

he stayed until Herod's death

And then in vv.19-23 the same pattern,

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

God entrusted His Son to faithful yet fallible parents, who I'm sure had days where they asked 'Are we doing a good job? We feel so inadequate. Are we where God wants us to be?' And God says, 'You're doing fine. I'm here. I'm guiding, directing, watching over all that you are doing even when it doesn't seem like I am here.'

I think that should encourage us in our parenting. God uses our faithfulness and our fallibility and shapes and guides **His** (their His more than ours) children into the disciples He conforms them to be.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God begins the work in each of us and uses imperfect people all around us to complete the work of making us more like Jesus. We just need to be obedient to His leading and Word in the process.

One more way Jesus relates to us as we look at His whole life, from infancy to adulthood

Jesus Endured Trials All His Life with Hope, Because He Trusted His Father's Words (John 16:29-33)

Jesus was fully aware of God's will for His life. He became obedient even to death on the cross. The night before He died He prayed that it was God's will for the cup of suffering to pass but if it wasn't then He would do God's will and not His own. That same night He prepared His followers to also endure trials with hope when He said in John 16

²⁹ Then Jesus' disciples said, "Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. ³⁰ Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

³¹ "You believe at last!" Jesus answered. ³² "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. ³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus knew they would struggle with his death, even temporarily abandon Him. But He also knew that they would return and do His will. He would be with them as His Father was with Him. That should give us peace and renew our hope. He said we would have trials but He also said I have endured and overcame them all. Take heart. We will too.

Jesus was a child. God wanted us to know that. Jesus got through it all. So will we. We are imperfect parents trying to bring our kids up in the Lord just as Joseph and Mary were. We live in a world hostile to truth but so was the world Jesus grew up in. In Jesus we have peace. He knows everything we are going through. Go to Him for help and He will give you the mercy and grace you need. We know how it will all end one day, with Jesus returning to rule as his Word says.

Rom. 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please
contact us at olivet@rideau.net