Christ Grows

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[0:00] I'm going to base the things that we look on tonight in the chapter that we read, Luke chapter 2, but I'll draw from other passages of Scripture. But if you can open your Bibles, if you have them in front of you to Luke chapter 2, that's going to be the foundational passage for us tonight.

Now, when we think about the person of Jesus Christ and all of the Gospels tell us about Jesus, we know some amazing things, don't we?
You think of what the Gospels tell you about Jesus, you know, as we saw a couple of weeks ago, of the incarnation, the incredible miraculous birth of Jesus. And you know of the incredible life that he lived and the miracles that he did and the care that he showed for people, the unceasing concern and the amazing way in which he drew people to himself and is identified as the Messiah.
We know of his death and his incredible miraculous resurrection. And then finally we read of the ascension, all of these things, the incredible life and witness and testimony of Jesus.
But of Jesus as a boy, as a teenager, Jesus growing, we know little. Maybe something you've not thought about very much or know very much about at all.
[1:20] Now, the Bible and the Gospels don't say a lot about that pain in Jesus's life. But the little that we do have, part of which we've read tonight, most of which we've read tonight, paints a vital picture for us, really important.

Don't dismiss or forget or think unimportant those years in which Jesus grew. So that's what we're going to focus on tonight, Jesus growing, some of the different aspects of what that looked like.
One principle to keep in mind as we go through tonight, one thing just to bear in mind. Jesus grew, and we'll see this in different ways as we go through tonight, he was both like us and unlike us.
Now, you know that, don't you? I'm sure you know that already, but and that has to do with another aspect of who he is, which I'm not going to go into too much because that's another sermon, but Jesus is both human and divine.
Jesus the God, man. So as we see and as we understand aspects of what it meant for Jesus to grow, we see, as I said, ways in which he is like us, but unlike us also.
[2:21] Bear that in mind. Two main headings, first of which I'm going to look at is Jesus, if you like, mind and body. Jesus is a physical person growing up. What did that look like?

And then secondly, in a little bit, we're going to look at Jesus, if you like, in his spiritual growth. Jesus mind and body. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born as we saw a couple of weeks ago, the Virgin, the great incarnation of Jesus.
Jesus grew physically and he grew relationally. Of course he did. It makes sense to say that, doesn't it? Jesus, we know, was born. The Bible teaches us that and Jesus died as a man about the age of 33.
So obviously he grew. He grew up. He became a man. It seems self-evident to say that. But one thing, do you think Jesus ever, as a growing person, as a boy, did he ever fall and hurt himself?
I don't mean to be irreverent by saying that at all. Not at all. But it's a simple question, maybe. But these are the kinds of things we sometimes just never think about. What was it like for Jesus growing up?
[3:29] In Luke chapter 2, we read a couple of things that simply established that fact. Luke chapter 2 verse 40, the child grew and became strong. That's expected.

We've already said that. That's at the end of the first section about him as an infant, a very young boy. And then at the end of the second section, the last verse there, verse 52, says again, Jesus grew in wisdom and stature.

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So we have that physical aspect and we have that, as it were, relational aspect. And there's more to it about the way that he learned, but we're going to come onto that in just a minute. So Jesus grew, but it's very important to understand that he didn't grow in some superhuman kind of way where nothing touched him and nothing troubled him.
And he never felt any of the things that we feel. Jesus was, if you like, subject to the same laws governing growth, physical development, and external or environmental agencies that we have, he faced the same things that you and I do.
He grew up like we did. So we read at other points, as we read of him as a young person, but also particularly into his ministry of the physical difficulties he had.
[4:49] He grew tired. He needed for things. He got hungry at times. And emotional as well, the emotions of Jesus don't think he's unemotional.

I don't mean emotional like he gets hysterical and loses it like we can sometimes, but I mean emotional as in he felt things. He understood relationally as you and I did.
So that simply to state that he grew in that way as you and I do. Important for us to understand that about Jesus. So he wasn't like, as I've said, some kind of superhero.
Again, this isn't to be trivial. You know the superhero stories, though, the whole point about their human persona is that they spend most of their time trying to disguise the fact that bullets bounce off them.
So they don't want anybody to see that they never really feel physical pain because they have to keep their identity secret. And that's not like we should understand Jesus. Jesus went through physical sensations and he grew as we did.
[5:51] So Jesus grew physically and he grew relationally as well. We see the relational aspect again just briefly in the words that are used to describe him here. And we'll come back to this, but you'll notice the way in which at the temple when his parents say to him, where have you been?

They were worried about him. After that, he went with his mother and it says he was submissive to her. So there is that relational aspect there as well. Jesus had parents and he grew relationally with them.
And in this aspect, particularly here, it shows us his obedience. Again, we'll come back to that. But Jesus also, and this is remarkable, isn't it?
Let me think about it. Jesus grew physically and relationally, but he also had to grow in his learning. You ever thought about that? Jesus had to learn.
Jesus had to learn. I wonder if you think that Jesus as a baby immediately had all of the facts of the universe imprinted on his brain.
[6:54] And as he grew, he automatically had all the information he needed. It was just there and he just had to click into it like some great supercomputer. Again, I don't think so. What we have in these, in this chapter and in the passages that we've read is Jesus in relational family life being brought to the place of worship.

He was brought by his family. He was brought up to learn and to study, to know God's laws, to know the Torah, the scriptures, and he was brought up to learn.
And so it describes, again, going back to that verse, Luke chapter 2 verse 40, the child grew and became strong and then it says he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.
He was filled with wisdom. But also, go again to verse 52, Jesus grew in wisdom. That's as a 12 year old boy. So that's described in the process of Jesus coming into the point where he would, as it were, come of age, become responsible, become a member of the religious community and Jesus grew in wisdom.
Jesus was growing in wisdom. And there's that central well-known passage there, isn't there? In verse 46, when it describes that incident where he stays behind of his own volition, he wants to stay, he wants to remain in the temple when his parents go home, presuming that he was with some family or friends or whoever, Jesus stays in the place of learning.
[8:28] Ask him questions and giving answers. And I don't think we should think that his questions were just to kind of trick the people he is around or to just display his learning.

He was interested. He was in the place where he would have heard the scriptures and he would have listened to them. And of course, he had exceptional understanding.
And again, we're going to come onto that. So Jesus grew up as somebody who was schooled in the scriptures and who learned and who, he didn't grow up saying, I don't need to go to church.

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I've got it all. I'm fine. His learning was, and again, we'll come to this, is different to ours. It was incredible, but yet he was, he put himself in that place of learning.
Now, Jesus learning doesn't just have to do with his academic understanding or his understanding of the Bible or his understanding of the culture that he was in. But if we think about Jesus learning, Jesus gathering knowledge and understanding and information, doesn't that also apply to just knowing things, life, understanding?
[9:41] Did Jesus know everything immediately? All at once, well, no. But of course, that might provoke a question in your mind. And you might say that. How on earth, you said at the start that Jesus is like us and he's not like us, that he's human and he's divine.

How can Jesus be divine and not know everything? How is that possible that Jesus could not know everything? A slide to go up.
Perhaps guys, we could have the first slide. I'm just going to put a verse up. Now, I just want to outline something. We can't stay here for long, but just to establish an important principle about Jesus as the divine human, as the God man and how that impacted aspects like this as we start to understand what it was like for Jesus to grow in learning.
Is this great verse in Philippians chapter two? My eyes are getting worse. I can hardly read that. In Philippians chapter two, we have that wonderful passage where it describes the way in which Jesus left glory and came to earth.
That humiliation, if you like, is becoming a servant. It says, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. How does Jesus not know everything?
[10:59] Simply to say this one thing. That verse there, it's gone. He made himself nothing. It's translated in other, translated otherwise as he emptied himself. That doesn't mean he stopped being God.

So if that's a tension for you, understand that what we're not talking about here is that Jesus, in some way, when he came into the world, when he was born, he left behind his divinity. And he just had this humanity and he had the experience just in the same way that we do.
Jesus was one who emptied himself. He became nothing in this thing, in this sense. Think about it like this. The capacity that he had as God still remained with him.
He was very God and very man. But some writers will describe it like his, the attributes of his, his goodness, all that he could do, all that he was.
They'll describe it as if it was concealed for a time. So in other words, he didn't use, he wasn't, didn't have access to all of those attributes of his divinity. Because it says, see that word there, taking the very nature.
[12:13] Because he came human, because he came as a man, in order to fully go through all that we did, he, he, he put aside as it were, the capacity of his Godhead in order to take on this humanity.

And so what that means is, just to say it in another way, that he became dependent. He became dependent. He didn't know everything. You know that if you think about the famous verse, Mark 13. Jesus talks about, he's speaking about the future. And the last days when the son of man will come back and he says, no one knows about that day or hour. Jesus at that point recognizes that he, he didn't know the timing of that day.
That hadn't been revealed to him. He was dependent in many ways on God. And that particular information hadn't been revealed to him.
That wasn't for him to know. And so in that sense, like us, he didn't know all that was going to come and all that was going to happen. So what does all this mean? That was a very briefly looking at the way in which Jesus, like us, grew physically, grew relationally.
[13:28] He had to grow in understanding and in learning. And not everything was at his fingertips. Didn't have access to all the information that was out there. What does that mean? It means for you and for me that we have a savior who can relate to us.

And that's really important for us to know. So Jesus isn't somebody who, who is vaguely interested in us. Jesus isn't somebody who dismisses us as pathetic.
We're not to think of ourselves like that in the way that God sees us. Because he created us and he made us. And in order to redeem us, he became one of us. And he can relate to us.
Second slide, please, guys. And so these verses, I want to put up a few verses in Hebrews that just, they just established that for us. And this is an important pastoral thing for us to understand.

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For us to understand the way in which Christ then relates to us. Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. In the next verse there, for this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way.
[14:43] And then the last verse, verse 18, because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Now that last verse there brings us into another facet, which we'll come on to later.

You see the way in which there that even brings in the aspect of Jesus suffering through temptation. And of course, it establishes a very important principle, which I welcome back to, which is that Jesus never gave into that temptation.
So Jesus relates, he knows you and he knows what it's like to be you, in a sense. He grew and he grew in learning. And he did not know everything at all points and he was dependent.
So these are, we have a savior who wants us to know this about himself. He is one who cares for us and he knows what you go through.
And he understands the difficulties that you face. That's the first part. Second part, spiritually, spiritually for want of a better word really. In what way did Jesus grow, apart from the physical growth, in terms of his relation to God?
[15:53] Because he did. First thing is that he was dependent as I just started to mention. The second thing is the awareness of his role as Messiah.

So in what way did Jesus grow? Well, first of all, spiritually, he was dependent on God. And this relates us back, doesn't it, to that verse that we looked at in Philippians chapter two.
Remember what it said in Philippians chapter two, that as he came into the world, as he humbled himself, he took on our form, he became human, but in order to be a servant, in order to be a servant, he came to be one who served and who gave himself.
And in this sense, he was dependent on God. He was dependent on God the Father and he was dependent on the Holy Spirit. And in this way, he's like us.
He's like us because he's a model for our personal reliance on God. Do you know the amount of times that it will describe Jesus? Even though he maybe had a very busy day and he was tired and he had many strains on him because of all the people that were constantly pressing around him and all the difficulties that he had.
[17:07] Even through all of that, it will describe him getting up early in the morning to go pray. He goes to his Father in prayer. Again, like we were saying about being in God's house, he needed to go to his Father.

He put himself in the place of dependence and he spoke to his Father. And so he's a model for us, a great model for us in that way. Of course, also in terms of his dependence, he's unique.
You think about a time when he was baptized, Jesus baptized and a voice came from heaven. This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased with. But also at that point, there's that very visual picture of the Holy Spirit.
He's anointed in that very special way as the Holy Spirit comes upon him. Now that means that as we think back to the whole thing about Jesus growing physically, relationally, but in his learning and in his understanding, it means that Jesus had the best teacher.
If I can put it like that. Jesus had the witness and the testimony and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministered to Jesus at various times.
[18:17] We don't have time to look at all the different ways in which that happened. You can think of great times when Jesus went through temptation and trial and in his ministry, don't think about him acting alone, a loose cannon out in the earth doing his own thing.

He was dependent on the Holy Spirit. I want to look at one way in which that plays out in terms of, again, this relates back to his learning and the way in which we see the Lord God, the Holy Spirit, teaching him.
Once a parallel, a couple of things. Back into Luke chapter 2. Jesus is in the temple. He's talking with the religious leaders and what's going on there.
It says in verse 46, after three days, they found him in the temple court, sitting among the teachers, listening and asking questions. We've seen that, haven't we? But then what does it say?
Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. They were amazed at him. He was talking about his own things. They were amazed at him. He was 12 years old.

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[19:23] Everyone was amazed at his understanding and his answers. So he's there listening, learning, growing, but he is absolutely commanding the attention of those who listen to him because of the discernment he seems to have into the scriptures.

Now, I want to take you just to one other passage. And this comes from into Jesus' adult ministry, so later on in his life. And Mark chapter 6, maybe you turn there just briefly.
I'm going to read the first two verses of Mark chapter 6. And there we read this. Jesus left there, went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.
When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue. He went to the place of religious worship and learning. He began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were amazed.
There's that same reaction. As Jesus brings his understanding in as he begins to teach, they're amazed. And they ask, where did this man get these things?
[20:34] What's this wisdom he's been given? He even does miracles. They go on to say, isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son? They're thinking, he hasn't had a formal religious education, maybe like we have.

Why, how does he know this stuff? Where is this wisdom come from? And they recognize it for the real godly wisdom that it is that Jesus brings to them.
And so they're amazed. Now, you see there, as a young boy and as an adult beginning ministry, Jesus' teaching is remarkable.
His learning and his insight stand out from the crowd and people are amazed and they remark on this. Now, this is evidence of the ministry and the witness and the support of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life.
That Jesus would have grown as we did. He would have read. He would have heard the scriptures. But I believe he was ministered to and he was enabled to learn so that as he grew, he had the best insight, if you can put it like that, the best insight as he had the help and the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
[21:51] So that's just one aspect, just one way in which we can see the work of the Holy Spirit teaching him and helping him as he was dependent. As he was one who had humbled himself, who was not exercising all the privileges and the capacities of his goodness, but he was learning and he was reliant on his father and on the Holy Spirit.

He grew in his dependence and in his understanding. And the second point in this part is he grew in his awareness of who he was and of his role.
Here's another question. Have you ever thought about this? Was there a point in which Jesus realized he was the Messiah? When did Jesus realize who he was? When did Jesus, how did that work in Jesus' understanding?
I think the first thing we can say about this is that again, this is a crucial part of that work I was talking about of the Holy Spirit. And as Jesus grew reading and learning and taking in the Scriptures and as he read prophecy particularly and all that the Scriptures were to say about the Messiah who was to come, as he naturally understood this and had it interpreted so also, it was something that would have been revealed to him.
Now I can't say exactly when. There are aspects of mystery here of course, aren't there? But you'll see that in this, another key verse in this passage that we're looking at in Luke chapter 2, key verses verse 49.
[23:31] Look at verse 49. His parents have said to him, you've really worried us, we've been looking for you, we couldn't find you. What have you been doing? And Jesus replies just amazing.

He says, didn't you know I had to be in my father's house? Or business is another way of translating it. I had to be about my father's business.
Didn't you know? Now some commentators and writers will say Jesus is almost rebuking his mother here. Some will say he's just almost amazed because he's so surprised that she doesn't click and get it. In some senses, I don't want to say, I don't mind, the core here is Jesus's early, the development of his early understanding of himself.
At this point in his life, he's aware of who he is and his ministry and his role. I had to be about my father's house. I had to be about my father's business.
And this takes us into the realm of thinking about the fact that as Jesus grew, so it grew upon him who he was and the role that he had to do.

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[24:42] That he was Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah with all of that entailed. And all that it would mean for him in his life, all that he was about as a person as he lived every moment of his life.

And it's quite an incredible thing to think about in many ways. Later in his adult life in ministry, again, let me just read one verse. John chapter 6, Jesus says, I've come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.
Now that ties in this aspect again of his understanding of who he was and of his role, again with his humility and his submission. Jesus came not to do his will, but to do the will of the one who sent him.
And then he goes on to say, and this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. Jesus had this incredible sense of who he was and the commitment he had to that was intense.
And it's a really amazing thing for us to think about. So Jesus, as he was growing as an ordinary human, like you and me, ordinary human divine, he had this consciousness of his role as the deliverer.
[26:12] This morning we were looking at Christ as the deliverer. Well, he had this consciousness of his role and of who he was to be. So Jesus grew, he grew physically, he grew relationally, and he grew also in his, he was one who was dependent and he grew in his awareness of his role.

I just want to say a couple of things then in applying that and as we finish. Let's not leave this kind of thing just in abstract terms.
How does that touch you and me? How does that change us? What does that do for us? I want to bring in one thing that actually relates to another sermon.
I'm cheating a little bit because we're looking at the person of Christ at the moment and then shortly we're going to start looking at the work of Christ. And there's one aspect of the work of Christ that goes very much hand in hand with this.
We said that Jesus was like us, but not like us. He was like us in terms of his experience except for one thing and that is that he never sinned.
[27:19] Jesus never sinned. In all of his physical, ordinary, human, day-to-day experience, at no point did he ever go against the will of his Father.

And that's something that you maybe know if you're a believer, that's what you hold on to, the fact that Jesus was without sin.
But it's something that is definitely a blessing to meditate on that he never sinned. Every time Jesus was presented with and grew to understand the will of his Father, every time he was called upon to obey, he did.
At no point did he say, I'm not going to do that. I won't go that far. I'm not willing to do that. At no point did Jesus do that. So he was obedient at every point.
And I want to just link that very briefly, one final slide, with his growing understanding of how that would relate to him in terms of prophecy. If you think about the things that Jesus would have grown up learning from the Scriptures, particularly a verse like this in Isaiah 53, for example, Jesus grew up reading and hearing verses like this.
[28:36] And of course, he had an incredible insight into what this meant because of who he was and because of what we've been looking at. But put this together with what it meant for his life, because this had so much to do with what would happen to him and what he would have to go through.

And that dawning understanding, you know, the times at which Jesus said to people, my hour has not come. It is not time for the work that he was going to have to do.
But think about that point in the Garden in Gethsemane, where Jesus finally knew the hour had come. And we read this verse, he was oppressed and afflicted.
Yet he did not open his mouth, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before it shears his silence. So he did not open his mouth. And that prophecy relating to the one who was to come, who was to be the deliverer and the Messiah, as Jesus in the Garden recognized that the hour, the time had come as he went into the Garden and prayed that great prayer which showed his understanding of all that this meant and all that it would entail for him as he went towards the cross. As he then allowed himself to be led by the soldiers quietly and peacefully as he went to the cross. We see one example of the way in which Jesus' understanding, his growing understanding, met

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with the reality of what he had to go through.
[30:14] And that changes things for us because he did that for us. He was submissive and he was obedient. As it says in verse in Hebrews chapter 5, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

So Jesus was obedient. At this point, this crisis point if you like in his life, he was obedient and he went through with the work that he had been given to do.
Second concluding thought, leading on from that is simply this. It just takes that thought on a little bit further. This means that when we think back to this passage that we've been looking at, look chapter 2, the boy Jesus.
At 12 years old, Jesus had a sense of being concerned for you. Jesus had a sense of who he was and his role. And Jesus wasn't just killing time.
You know when he was... that period we sometimes think about between his birth and his ministry. We think all the action happened in the three years. That's when he obeyed. That's when he was holy and particularly when he went to the cross.
[31:23] Absolutely. What did he do for those 30 years? Well, he was doing perfectly what you and I can't do. He was perfectly growing in obedience to the will of his Father.

So as he came into the time of his public ministry and as he went to the cross to be the one who would become the sacrifice, the substitute, he was an appropriate sacrifice. He was a right substitute because he had devoted his life to perfect, conscious obedience to the Father.
And he did that because we can't do it. And this takes you back again to that verse in Philippians chapter 2. He became a servant. He took on servanthood. That's how he served you because he did what you can't do. He perfectly obeyed.
And that should touch us. That should change us because it reveals to us as we see Jesus as somebody who grew ordinarily, so also in a remarkable way, he grew into his understanding of and his fulfillment of the role that he had been given so that he might set us free.
Amen. I'm going to pray. Lord, we praise you tonight for your greatness. There is so much we can't understand, but we recognize something of the outworking of your purposes and your great will for us. Thank you that you sent your son.
[33:03] Thank you that he perfectly submitted and was obedient to all that you had for him to do. We thank you also that we have a Saviour who has finished his work, but yet who is able to sympathize with us in our ordinary lives. We thank you, though, that even when he was tested and when he was tempted, he did not sin, he did not give in, and no point did he go against your will. And so we praise you for his finished work.

And we praise you, Lord, that there is so much more still yet that we can learn about Christ our Saviour. And we look forward to these evenings where we can find out about Jesus. Help us to put these things into practice and to live following our Saviour Jesus.
In his name we pray. Amen.

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