

The Boy Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] But there's no doubt that part of his role was that he's our redeemer, that he's our Savior. God becomes flesh and he becomes our substitute on the cross. But in order to be our substitute, in order to be a redeemer, he needs to know what it is to live among people and to be a human being and to be aware of the stresses and struggles and strains.

And in many ways these 30 years must have been preparation for him. He lived in a family. It was, in many ways, just in terms of the families around him, probably a very ordinary family. If we can call it a working class family. And as the oldest son in that family, he probably had to deal, as I've mentioned in prayer, with the reality of the death of a loved one. Most people believe, because there's very little mention of Jesus later on in the Gospels, that Joseph died when the family were still fairly young. And it might well be the case that Jesus had to take on board that grief and also that responsibility of the eldest son taking the role of headship within the family. He knew home life. He wasn't always the itinerant preacher that we take him to be, the one who's going from place to place with no place to rest his head, as he says himself. But there was a time in his life where he spent many years working, labouring, maturing, developing patience, developing understanding, developing knowledge, not only of himself, but of his family and of people in general, as he lived among them. And the human nature learning so much about the situation he was in. And he would have come to know and love the people that he lived among, obviously his family, but also those around him, those that he worked with, those that he did carpentry work for, those who came and bartered with him and dealt with him. He probably understood things about debt and about responsibility, about struggles, about money, about living, about poverty, about making ends meet. Jesus, God's Son, spent so many years in anonymity that we don't know anything about him. God, the Redeemer, the angels look towards for all eternity. And he's living his life in anonymity, living quietly, maturing and growing and being prepared for his public ministry and for what that involved. But there's just a couple of scripture references that I want to read and speak about briefly this morning.

The first is from Matthew chapter 2 and verse 13 to 18. The escaped to Egypt, we know that part of the story and he would have been very young at this point, Jesus, still a baby, because the family escaped the clutches of Herod by moving down to Egypt, moving out of their home territory.

Matthew chapter 2 and verse 13, we'll read through to verse 18, when they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, that is when the wise men had gone. And 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. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet out of Egypt, I have called my son. When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, who were two years old and under in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled, a voice is heard in Rama, weeping and great mourning,

Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more. And then briefly after that it says, and after Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who are trying to take your life, your child's life or dead.

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. So we have here the story of Jesus going down with his family as a very young child into Egypt and then returning from Egypt, probably three or four, maybe five years later. He would have been a young boy when he returned back from Egypt, returned out of Egypt, back to his own land of Israel. And so his early

childhood memories are not necessarily very settled ones and not that easy for him as he remembers the insecurity of having to move to a foreign country, the displacement, the fear for his life, the fact that he was, although there was quite a big Jewish diaspora down in Egypt, he was still in a different place and he was still an outsider in that country. And he would have known all that, even as a small child, you know how it's amazing how receptive small children are to these things. [5 : 45] We sometimes think they don't notice or don't take in things, but small children are very receptive. They pick up on fears and they pick up on insecurities and they pick up on struggles even within their parents and around about them. And so he would have known all of these things in his early childhood memories as the Son of God. He didn't have that privileged, secure, warm, carefree young childhood that maybe we think the Son of God should have had. But he returned out of Egypt and there's great spiritual symbolism in that for us.

The Bible points that out and we note that we see a great link, a great closeness between the Old and the New Testament linking Jesus Christ's coming with what happened in the Old Testament. And that's tremendous and it's encouraging for us because Jesus did with his family go down to Egypt and he did come out of Egypt after a number of years and went back to Nazareth. And that's a true story, but it's also symbolic. There's great spiritual symbolism. God uses what had happened to great effect symbolically for us. Remember Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily for Jewish people and they knew all about the Old Testament history. They knew all about what happened in the Exodus. They knew all about Egypt. Egypt was some country that was very real in their history and in their culture and their background. And so we have that tremendous account here of Jesus coming out of Egypt and Matthew through the Holy Spirit linking that with a prophecy in Hosea, the one that we read. The one that we read at the beginning of the service. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, out of Egypt I call my son. So we have this linking of Old Testament history and prophecy with Jesus coming out of Egypt as a child and coming back into Nazareth. Out of Egypt I have called my son. And what we have there is God filling out. You could use that as a different way of understanding full filling in this sense. He's filling out the Old Testament. He's taking out of its shadows and he's saying look there's a link between the Old Testament and the New. And there's a link between what happened in the Old Testament to Jesus ending up going into Egypt and then coming out of Egypt and he says look and see it and see the link that is there. See the theme that is there. And recognize that when God spoke in Hosea, when he spoke in Hosea about out of Israel I've called my son now, we know that refers in Hosea to Israel, the people. And we know it goes on to refer to their rebellion. But we see here God taking and giving a deeper application as well and saying it also refers to my son Jesus being called out of Egypt back to Nazareth. And there's a link then between the Old and the New Testament. And there's a redemptive link even here, even at this point. We're asked to look just beyond the kind of sentimental nice warm or maybe not so nice warm sentimental thoughts of Jesus in Egypt and see a spiritual link between what happened in the Old Testament and what God was doing providentially in taking Jesus out of Egypt into Nazareth. God is making a great and a close link and there's lots of brilliant parallels between Moses and the redemption of the people out of Egypt with Jesus coming to redeem his people out of slavery from sin. God in that passage refers to Israel as his son. I have out of Egypt I've called my son and you know that's a great Old Testament story isn't it? That Jesus sends Moses to bring his people out of slavery and bring them into a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey. And yet in Hosea this is Jesus bemoaning the fact that even though he loved them like a child he was fatherly towards them, he gave his grace poured out his grace out on them. They just kept worshipping idols. They kept ignoring them, they kept rejecting him and so they end up in this place of separation from God where they are taken out in captivity and they lose that closeness with them and gee God is bemoaning the fact that they turn their back on them all the time. And yet here is the Christ that will be the faithful and true son will be the opposite of Israel, will be in a sense the true Israel. Now I'm sure there's a reference somewhere in Scripture to Jesus being the Israel of God. I'm not quite sure, I couldn't find one. But certainly there's a link between Jesus being almost the true son, the true Israel of God and he's going to be the one who having come out of Egypt will be God's beloved Redeemer. And there's no doubt that the Old Testament Exodus points towards the work that Jesus is going to do, slavery and redemption and a home and a kingdom and blood sacrifice and the blood protecting the people who put it on the lentils and all pointing forward to being protected by the blood of Jesus and by his redemption and by his work of freedom on our

part. And at the same time therefore Jesus becomes kind of a prototype of Jesus and we see the links between that Old Testament picture and shadows of what Moses has done and what Jesus therefore is going to come and do for his people. So you've got Moses who is also threatened with annihilation, threatened with loss of life and he's protected and the leader of the day wipes out all the young children under boys under two years of age and so the same as with Jesus Christ and we see him also leading the people doing miraculous signs, we see him taking them through the Red Sea, Christ taking his people through the waters of baptism into the promised land of a land flowing with milk and honey and for us the new kingdoms, new heavens and the new earth. So there's this kind of, there's this sense of which Moses gives a little bit of a picture of what Jesus comes to do and what Moses did for the Old Testament people,

Jesus does for all the people, the Israel of God, all of God's people in heaven and on earth. So we see Jesus even in his young days coming out of Egypt, four or five years old and God linking that with the Exodus out of Egypt I have called my son. It's not much room, there's not much room there for sentimentality, there's not much room there for cotton wool and for a life of ease and for a gentle breaking into his work. We have there the reality of Christ born into a world and we've read it there, born into a world of violence, a world of rejection, a world of turmoil, of hatred, of murder, a world of displacement, a world of mistrust and a world where even in his early years he's being linked to his great redemptive work and all that lies ahead for him in that. It's vital that we don't patronise him by sentimentalising his birth and his early years, all part of the preparation for his redemptive work. And that comes even more clearly through in the second scripture reading about Jesus as a boy and that's maybe slightly older and slightly more of a boy, almost a teenager in Luke chapter 2, if you want to read that with me, in Luke chapter 2 and in verse 40 there it's on page 1029, this is when he's 12 years old so we've got one or two children in the kins church around 12 years old so Jesus here was just about hitting his teenage years. And in verse 40 we read after his five or six years in Nazareth it comes to this age and the child grew and became strong, he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him. Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover and when he was 12 years old they went up to the feast according to the custom after the feast was over while his parents were returning home the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem but they were unaware of it thinking he was in their company they travelled on for a day then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends and when they did not find him they went back to Jerusalem to look for him after three days they found him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers and when his parents saw him they were astonished his mother said to him son why have you treated us like this your father and I have been anxiously searching for you why were you searching for me he asked didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house but they did not understand what he was saying to them and he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them but his mother treasured all these things in her heart and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men. So we've seen him coming returning out of Egypt and now we see him travelling to the temple at slightly older age around 12 years of age a few years eight to ten years later maybe and what's remarkable about this passage more than anything I feel is it's just the picture of an unremarkable family life there's nothing really dramatic about what is happening here but we have an account of Jesus and his family all together with the community of people from Nazareth who

[16 : 30] would have all gone up for the Passover they all would have gone up together it's a lovely picture of fellowship and of community and they probably all kind of spent time in each other's company and Joseph would have been with the men and Mary would have been with the women and Jesus with all the kids and sometimes with his mum sometimes with his dad and it's just an ordinary picture of family life in the Middle East at the time and of the religious rituals and the religious life and the devotion and the devoutness of their lives as they went up to celebrate the Passover feast with people who would have travelled from all over to enjoy and celebrate that time together nothing really to know nothing dramatic you know Jesus didn't have a glow about him he didn't walk on his own floating around see some kind of pseudo-spiritual mystical kind of ghostly being you know he didn't have a kind of strange kind of bit odd smile on his face all the time he was just an ordinary boy an ordinary boy with with an ordinary family at many levels as he lived his life and this is just a picture of that unremarkable family life but we know that he wasn't just an ordinary boy but we do know that he was a growing lad he grew up just ordinarily like a like a boy would grow up albeit the Son of God albeit without sin he still grew up twice we're told that and he the child

in verse 40 grew and became strong he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him so there's a physical strengthening he's also spiritual and there's a spiritual life in him as he relates with his father in heaven and then in verse 52 we're at the beginning and end verse and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men so as he was fleshing out what it was to be the Redeemer as he was fleshing out his own life and as he was beginning to unfold his own identity he was growing in favour with God he was also fulfilling the commands to grow in favour with people and to love others and he was becoming physically strong so it's a picture of the child the Son of God who becomes flesh growing up eating playing learning laughing crying serving understanding himself and his uniqueness growing in knowledge of who he was do you think from the womb he knew who he was do you think he had a consciousness at that point to say I am this I'm God because he takes on flesh and he grows and he grows in understanding and in knowledge as we grow in understanding and knowledge yes that knowledge became was run bridle by by sinful blockage but nonetheless he grows and he's understanding and you see him beginning to understand himself here in this time and in this part of his life is it surely significant that he comes to the Passover the Passover meal the Passover feast is that not significant wasn't the feast of tabernacles it wasn't any of the other feast it was the Passover feast that he comes to that's linking us back to out of Egypt

I've called my son it's linking us back to the the redemption from Egypt isn't it the whole Passover meal was a celebration of God's redemption from Egypt and so here's Jesus he's remembering that Passover and remember what they said in the Old Testament about the children see see when the children ask questions when you're walking along the road with them when you get up in the morning when you go when they ask questions at the Passover meal when they ask about the meal when they ask about the shed blood when they ask about the lamb tell them about the redemption tell them about God tell them about grace so Jesus would have known all these things at the Passover meal and he's beginning surely to understand here his own redemptive work he's thinking back to his almost precognitive childhood and is being taken out of Egypt and what that meant and he's thinking to back to his own knowledge surely of the Old Testament and to Moses into the Passover meal he's beginning to understand is he not that he's to be the lamb that is slain and the awesome reality of the task that was going to lie ahead for him so he stayed he stayed in the temple I don't know if there's any spiritual significance in the fact that it was three days maybe maybe not maybe that's just a bit too much of a spiritual spiritualizing of the passage but nonetheless he's there for three days three days and three nights and during the time he's there he spends a lot of time with religious leaders and he astounds them by his questions and by his answers and by his wisdom as God's son and he becomes aware himself of what he's doing and he's aware of his father not of his earthly father but of his heavenly father

I need to be about my father's work or my father's home or my father's business however we understand that particular translation and he knows and he is significantly learning while he is there he's learned about his father he's learned about his work and presumably his parents spent the first day just thinking Joseph thought I was with Mary Mary thought I was with Joseph and they never worried because there was just a nice big community in fact it was quite a nice problem isn't it you know they didn't have to have fill in child protection forms it was it was quite open and honest together and they reckoned Joseph Jesus was with either one or the other or with all the kids someone else and then they realized he wasn't there and they so they spent the second day looking throughout the whole community for him and then they began to panic and they realized he's not there so they head back to Jerusalem because that's what you do is a pain you go back you retrace your steps and there they find him in the temple and it's an amazing experience that those who are around him have with Jesus and with his 12 year old wisdom and knowledge and his beginning to understand the business and the work that he has come to do but then he immediately goes home with his parents because this time hasn't come yet so we see Jesus coming out of Egypt and we see him traveling to the temple that's all we know about his childhood really other than his very early days his boyhood but it's quite informative isn't it even the silence is informative and because it enables us to at one level speculatively think about how he lived and what he did and why he did it and why he took so long and why it was 30 years old and all kinds of reasons behind the short that the public ministry being a tenth of his life only a tenth of his life we really only know about a tenth of his life three years of his public ministry but what can we learn from the God child or the God boy for ourselves these passages are they there for a reason are they there for us

surely we're reminded of the cost of grace the grace that we've been looking at over the last six months the cost of grace right from the beginning that the Creator God becomes created and lives in anonymity and lives just an ordinary life you know everyone wants to be special don't they everyone wants their life to have great significance everyone wants to when they lay their mortal coil they want to have said there's a great something there that people will remember but Jesus just lives in anonymity for 30s because that's what most of us do that's what most of us do the Creator becomes the created and he knows outstanding vulnerability in that I long to know more about his childhood I hope

I'll find out more about his childhood in heaven long to know how he lived how he responded as a child how he dealt with his parents must have been amazing but he comes the cost of grace is beginning to unfold and he lives his early 30 years or his 30 years in enemy territory spiritually enemy territory remember that but we also learn surely that scriptures are God's unfolding story aren't they don't just close the Old Testament because it's difficult or because there's bits you don't understand there's a redemptive theme right from the very beginning which is picked out here the Bible is in that history of the world part one it's not really that story of how everything has happened it's about why and it's about who that's the work of scripture it is to tell us about ourselves and tell us about God it's not really to speak about origins in the sense of what or how these origins came about it's much more of a relational book that tells us about God's unfolding story it's redemptive from Genesis 3 onwards if I brought it from Genesis 1 if truth be told but in the beginning of clarity comes from Genesis 3 it's God's redemption and Moses in Egypt is a great beginning point for that for the shadowy redemption that they received that is much greater than Jesus Christ greater freedom spiritual personal freedom from the slavery to death and sin and the grave and also it may be delving a little bit into Christ's mind here but surely even at this point of his childhood the cross was beginning to become something he was conscious of for 18 years he lived after this in anonymity obedient submissive maturing I just want to read a verse before we finish from Hebrews chapter five verse eight and nine because it speaks about during the days of Jesus life on earth he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death and he was heard because of his reverent submission although he was a son he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect that is once made mature he became the source of eternal salvation for all who believe him or who be him and was designated by God to be a high priest in the order of Melchizedek so there's a definite hint in these verses in Hebrews that Jesus spent these 30 years learning obedience being made mature and ready to be the Lamb of God he had to be the one who had shown himself to be the obedient child and lived a perfect life so that he could be the lamb without blemish our redeemer we're not without blemish but our lamb is without blemish and this this life of anonymity surely was a preparation for that public ministry and through what he has done not only been a son of Egypt but the one who called God father and we did a sermon on that not that long ago we swear we see the explosion of the term father in the New Testament that Jesus takes he calls God in heaven father as he's filled with his spirit and as he's God's son so that we through him can also call God father that's really significant what Jesus has done enables us to cry Abba father we can know his protection and his love and his grace his adoption his belonging and the home that he prepares for us so that there's gentle and I hope simple lessons for us to take even from the boyhood of Jesus so far you today and for me as Christ worthy as the lamb who was slain is he worthy as his life and his death that made you fall in your knees I'm not so worried about physically but spiritually falling your knees in adoration and submission to give him his lordship his first place because he's worthy because as God he lived in anonymity here for 30 years and then had his public ministry and then was nailed to a cross to be your redeemer is he worthy or are you just leaving him to some point in the future that you may consider him when you think you may need him he's he's just a forgettable child in a manger wheeled out of the cupboard Christmas day wheel back into the cupboard till next year choose this day whom you will serve as Christ Lord or is he not that really is the option that we have to consider and I hope and pray that in our lives by grace and through faith that we can live with Christ as Lord and know his grace and his sonship and his love and his joy in our hearts as poor heads and pray father God help us to live our lives with an understanding of faith believing in the revelation you've given of yourself and that you've given us it the way you have for your own purpose for our understanding and grant us the faith to believe and to serve and to know your love and to be transformed and to be amazed that

[31 : 28] God in the flesh son would come and live with such anonymity and with such submission such willingness to learn to be obedient to his father in heaven and also his own earthly parents to serve and to work and to earn and to laugh and to cry and to be family and to wrestle with his brothers and sisters and to know these ordinary things which sometimes we think is unworthy of God and maybe irrelevant to him Lord may we know that you understand and may we know that you have taken all that rejection that you were aware of and saw and understand his inner hearts and you still through love went all the way to the cross and to the depths of its darkness and pain and shame in order to set us free far greater freedom than the Israelites knew out of Egypt so Lord God help us to see these spiritual lessons in the physical life of Jesus and help us to worship and praise you as Lord and God for we ask in his precious name. Amen.