

MONTH OF JESUS: THE START OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Luke 3:21-22 ... "When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while he prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased."
4:1 ... "Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness."

Jesus was born between 6 and 4 BC and lived for about 32 years before he was crucified. If mistakes had not been made when the modern calendar was created, we would recognize the year 0 (zero) AD as the moment when Jesus was born. The Bible does not say much about the life of Jesus between his birth and the start of his public ministry, when he was about 30 years of age. That was the traditional age that Rabbi's began their service. We do know that Jesus was circumcised when he was eight days old and he was taken to the temple 40 days after his birth. That is when Simeon and Anna met him (see our previous devotional).

When Jesus was 12, his parents took him to the temple for his first Feast of the Passover, and Luke 2:41-50 tells us that Jesus spent time in the temple discussing the scriptures with the priests, astonishing everyone. In Luke 2:51 and 52 we are told that Jesus was subject to the authority of his parents and he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Since we know that Jesus lived a perfect, sinless, and holy life, there can be no doubt that he fulfilled all of the commandments of God. After this, we do not encounter Jesus again in the Bible until he appears at the Jordan river to be baptized by John the Baptist. This is what we consider the start of his public ministry. After being baptized, he spent 40 days fasting in the desert, during which he was tempted by satan. Upon emerging from the desert, he began public teaching and recruited his disciples.

Why did Jesus not begin teaching until he was 30? First, that was the age at which Rabbis began their ministries, and Jesus was considered a Rabbi. Had he started teaching earlier than that, he would have been considered a fraud, or untrained, or a cult leader. Second, Jesus came to earth as a man. He left his powers behind when he left heaven. So, as a child he studied the scriptures and character of God just like we do. Certainly, Jesus had the Holy Spirit of God ministering to him from the time of his birth in a way that was probably far more intense than the Spirit ministers to us, but Jesus still respected the time of learning and growing that his first thirty years offered him. That also demonstrated his respect for the people he taught.

I hope that our look at Jesus' life during this month of celebration, has expanded your knowledge of him, and that he seems more real to you than before. I urge you to not think that Jesus is unapproachable because he is God. He came to earth as a man so that you can relate to him on a personal level. He died a terrible death so you can live. He is alive today, preparing heaven for you. He has done everything possible to reach out to you and make himself real to you. All you have to do is accept his offer of friendship and forgiveness. Do not hesitate. Do it today.

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