

CHRISTMAS SERIES

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

Let us look at Luke 1 at the announcement of Gabriel to Mary. Verse 30 *Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

We know that this is a virgin birth because Mary said, "How shall it be for I have known no man." What happened in Mary's womb was not a creation of Jesus but rather the coming of Jesus into this planet earth. Jesus chose to come in that manner. Jesus emptied Himself of the Godhead and came into Mary's womb. Before the angel appeared to Mary and she became an instrument for Jesus to be born, God the Son was in heaven. His name was not called Jesus Christ yet. The name Jesus was only taken after He manifested on this earth. The angel told Mary to call His name Jesus, which means, "God is my salvation." Christ means anointed One, the Messiah who is to come. Therefore, the name Jesus Christ was only taken after Jesus was manifested on this planet earth about 4 B.C. according to historians. Jesus Christ was called the Word in heaven.

God is a Trinity. We have God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus' name before He came down was known as God the Word. The Trinity was there in heaven and the Bible says in Gal. 4:4, *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.* In the fullness of time God send an angel to prepare a way for Jesus to come. However, before that took place, something else happened in heaven. Jesus emptied Himself of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Jesus had gone back to God and in Jn. 17: 4-5 He prayed, *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work, which*

You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. Jesus had that glory with the Father before the world was. That was His glory. He has omniscience - He knows all things. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He can be everywhere at the same time. Therefore, Jesus emptied Himself of His *omni* attributes and He came down to this planet earth. Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence in heaven in order to be born on planet earth.

This was the arrangement God made in the book of Hebrews 10:5 *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, However, a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, You had no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me- to do Your will, O God.*

Verse 5 it tells us that a body was prepared for Jesus to come into the world.

Chronologically, the process of the virgin birth took place in this order.

There was a creation of a body in Mary's womb. Then Jesus, emptied of His omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, came down in spirit form into the womb of Mary. This is called the incarnation of the Word. The Holy Spirit brought Him down into Mary's body. In fact, I would venture to say that Jesus Christ has so emptied Himself of His divine attributes that He literally became hapless. He could not leap down from heaven by Himself into the womb of Mary, as one Christmas carol puts it. He had to rely on the Holy Spirit to bring Him to be born in the womb of Mary. A few verses attest to this: *"She was found with child of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1: 18) "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1: 20) "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1: 35)*

Please do not try to wrestle and understand it with your natural mind. Remember in the spirit realm there is no dimension. In the kingdom of darkness, a thousand or a million demons could dwell in one person. It makes no difference; there is no such thing as space in the realm of the spirit. Jesus came down in the spirit. Jesus is the only one whose spirit was not created at all. Jesus was not created in Mary's womb. Remember His name in heaven is the Word. Rev. 19 tells us that His name is still called the Word. Therefore, the Word came down. Jn. 1 calls Him the Word too, and came into that body.

Strictly speaking, Mary's womb was an incubator for Jesus to come through. A body was created in Mary's womb, then Jesus came in and that is the full process of the virgin birth. She is a vessel of God where God chose to use her womb in much the same way as God would choose to use somebody's mouth to proclaim the gospel or somebody's hands to heal the sick. God chose to use her womb as a special instrument during that time.

Later on in the book of Acts 1 and 2, you find that Mary needed to go through the same process as any disciples. She needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. She needs to pray. She was an instrument. This is the process of the virgin birth as the Bible shows it.

The birth and childhood of Jesus is intertwined with the life of humanity. In each recorded episode of Jesus' childhood, we see a deeper meaning in reference to the birth of other servants. Jesus said of Himself, "I came to serve and not to be served." His purpose for being born was to serve and die for the world. Thus, when He was born, not only is the Savior of the world born, other servants of God would also be birthed through the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus would see the birth of many others who would serve as He did, and die as He did, for the world. Embedded in each episode of Jesus' birth and childhood are the secrets to birthing the characteristics of true men and women of God who would follow Him in service and suffering. On that Christmas morning, not only was the Savior born but the servants that would have their turn to be born down the ages were also born in Him.

Four main incidences of Jesus' childhood were recorded in the Bible. Chronologically, they are

1. When He was a baby laid in a manger and visited by shepherds (Luke 2: 8-20)
2. When He was presented at the Temple for circumcision and visited by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2: 21-40)
3. When He was at home between one to two years old and visited by the three wise men (Matthew 2: 1-12)
4. When He was 12 years old at the Temple with the teachers of the Law. (Luke 2: 39-50)

These four recorded incidences of Jesus' childhood reveal powerful truths about the birth of true servants who imitate Jesus closely. Many of us often wondered about

the silent years of Jesus. Except for these four childhood incidences, nothing else is heard about Jesus until He was about the age of 30. If the life of Jesus were recorded in detail, it would require great volumes of books. Therefore, the Bible summarizes incidences in Jesus' life. It is incorrect for us to say that the Bible does not say anything about His childhood because the Bible does. However, the Bible gives us a summary of these four incidences in the childhood of Jesus as a prophetic overture of what will take place in Jesus' ministry.

In each incidence, there is the place involved and there are the types of people present. Both the place and the people shed more light to the prophetic significance of the incidence.

I. The Baby Jesus in the Manger with the Shepherds

In the first recorded incidence, Jesus was placed on a manger after He was born. *And she [Mary] brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2: 7). And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger (Luke 2: 12).*

The place here is a manger. A manger is a long open box or trough to contain hay and grass for animals to feed. Symbolically, the animals represent the different forms of the devil. When Lucifer and his fallen angels were cast down from heaven to earth, they lost their celestial beauty and took the form of hideous beasts. They feed themselves on the evil that they tempt men to do. Just as Jesus' food is to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work (John 4: 34), so likewise, it is the food of demons to do the will of their father Satan. The manger represents the devil's territory where demons feed themselves on the sins, wickedness, evil, and bondages of humankind. After Jesus was born, He was placed on a manger. This is a prophetic symbol of His coming to the devil's territory and His destroying the devil's works over the lives of humanity. *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3: 8). Jesus has come to the devil's tuff to overthrow him. He has come into the lion's den to shut the mouth of the roaring lions, so that they will not devour whomsoever they will.

Jesus was also born at night. Night is the symbolic representation of the works of darkness. When Judas went out of the twelve to betray Jesus, John recorded it as, *"And it was night."* (John 13: 30) Paul also equates night with the powers of darkness in 1 Thess 5: 5, *You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.* Jesus' birth at night is another symbolic representation that the

light has come into the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. It means that Jesus the light of the world has come into the devil's territory and the kingdom of darkness to shed light and overcome the works of darkness. He was born to deliver souls from the kingdom of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of light.

Thus, the birth of Jesus at night and the placing of the Babe in the manger have both the same meaning of the Savior coming into the devil's kingdom of darkness to destroy the works of the devil.

The people here are the shepherds. Luke 2: 8, *Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.* Luke 2: 15, *So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.*

The angels told the shepherds, who were keeping watch over their flock by night, that the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David and that the sign would be a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger (Luke 2: 11-12). Having seen the significance of the Babe lying in a manger, now we can see the significance of the angels announcing to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night about the birth of the Savior. The lowly shepherds represent all true and humble servants of God who keep watch over their flocks. While the hirelings and the false shepherds are in their "slumber land" and know not that the wolves are tearing their flocks apart by every seduction and deception, the true shepherds are wide-awake when darkness falls to guard the flocks entrusted to them. They bear the heat by day and the cold by night. They shed many tears of intercession over their flocks that the wolves and the wild beasts of the evil one may devour none of them.

The good news for the shepherds is that the Babe lying in the manger is the Chief Shepherd and Savior who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, the roaring lions, and the marauding wolves. The good news for all true servants of God is that they can rely on Jesus who will empower them with the grace and the anointing to grab the souls of sinners from the jaws of the enemy.

Luke 2: 20, *Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.* Herein lies the secret of the power of shepherds who watch over their flocks effectively. These shepherds saw the Babe in

the manger, and they went into a time of praise and worship. Those who serve God as pastors and ministers should see Jesus as the Babe in the manger, not literally but spiritually speaking. Jesus as the Babe in the manger means the Anointed One who has come into the devil's territory to bind the strongman and plunder his goods. He is as Acts 10: 38 says, *"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."*

When servants of God are strong in worshipping Jesus as the Mighty Deliverer and the Anointed One, they also grow in that anointing to do good and heal all who are also oppressed by the devil. One of the principles of worship is that when you worship God for a particular aspect or attribute of His, God will release the spiritual substance of the same aspect or attribute into your spirit man. For example, when you worship God constantly as Jehovah Rapha or the Lord Your Healer, God will release the spiritual substance of healing into your spirit man until you experience healing for your sicknesses or you develop a strong ministry of healing. When you are ineffective in your ministry of healing and deliverance, one of your serious lacks is a life that worships Jesus as the Deliverer.

The true worth of a shepherd is seen in how he has effectively dealt with each soul committed to his care. Man tends to measure the worth of a pastor by the number of people in his congregation. If he has a huge congregation, he becomes a celebrity pastor and will be invited to numerous conventions around the world to share his secrets of how to grow a large church. That is man's ways. It is not God's way.

Recently a Christian who was sent up on a study tour of heaven came back with this report. In heaven, he was ushered into two offices belonging to two pastors who are still alive and serving the Lord. One pastor is a very famous healing evangelist who has his own TV programs, miracle crusades and is Senior Pastor of a large church too. The other pastor has a congregation of 1000 but was rather unknown by name or work in the world. In each pastor's office in heaven were two sets of files of people committed to their respective care. One set of files belongs to people whose lives were not dealt with properly and God had to continue dealing with them until they change. The other set of files belongs to people who were reforming their lives for the better and God was pleased with their progress. However, in the famous pastor's office in heaven, the set of files belonging to people not dealt properly or not making progress was stacked up very high whereas the number of files belonging to people making progress in their spiritual life was very few. In the other obscure pastor's office in heaven, it was different. The number of files belonging to people not making progress was very few whereas the set of files

belonging to people making progress in their spiritual lives was stacked high. In God's sight, the second pastor was of greater worth because he is effectively shepherding and dealing his people to walk in righteousness and God's ways. The first pastor though famous in men's sight, was actually considered the lesser of the two in the kingdom of heaven because he is not shepherding his people effectively.

So, do not be proud if your church is growing. Do not look at the numbers but ask yourself whether you are effectively shepherding your flock and causing them to walk in the ways of the Lord. On the other hand, do not be dismayed if your church is not growing. Ask yourself whether you are faithfully dealing with each member God has already entrusted to your care. If you are not faithfully and effectively dealing with your members, why should God add to your congregation? It would only mean greater condemnation for you, as you have to account for more souls. So, be faithful with whatever you have, and when God sees that you are faithful, He will add to your congregation. Do not use hype, gimmicks, and Madison Avenue-type advertising to draw in the crowds. If God has called you into the ministry, God will know how to bless your ministry through your faithfulness. If you try to draw in the crowds through fleshly means, you would also probably draw in people who would prove to be a thorn in your flesh. What is born of flesh is flesh. Satan will plant his agents in your congregation to bring about your downfall.

II. The Baby Jesus at the Temple with Simeon and Anna

On the 40th day after His birth, the Child Jesus was brought to the Jerusalem temple - the center of the religious life of the chosen people of Israel. According to Mosaic Law, a woman that had given birth to a male child was forbidden entrance to the temple for 40 days. After the lapse of this time, the mother would bring the child to the temple to offer a thanksgiving and a cleansing sacrifice to the Lord.

Luke 2: 25-32, And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said : "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Simeon was a man not only of Holy Spirit but of great patience as well.

According to history, he was a highly intelligent scholar and a deeply religious man, who knew from his interpretation of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to come. He prayed not only for deliverance, but for the opportunity to remain alive just long enough to cast his eyes on the Messiah. This was no small request made of the Lord, for it is quite certain, although estimates vary as to his actual age, that he was born many years before Christ. Simeon is estimated to have been at least 150 years old at the time of the Nativity, and only because God had given him those many years in answer to his earnest prayers that he be allowed to live to that great day.

Simeon was one of the famous Seventy, who were chosen to translate the Bible from Hebrew into Greek in the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.). Simeon worked conscientiously, but when, translating the prophet Isaiah, he came to the prophecy: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," he was puzzled. He took a knife to scratch out the word "virgin" and substitute "young woman," and translate it thus into Greek. But, at that moment an angel of God appeared to him and held him back from his intention, explaining to him that the prophecy was true and rightly expressed. And to confirm its veracity, the messenger from God said that he, Simeon, by the will of God, would not die until he had seen the Messiah born of a virgin. The righteous Simeon rejoiced at these heavenly tidings, left the prophecy unchanged and thanked God that He had found him worthy to live to see the Promised One.

Some members of a particular local church who were sent to heaven on the instructions of the Holy Spirit came back with some reports for our learning. Apparently, a departed saint by the name of Sadhu Sundar Singh heard of the visits of these church members to heaven and yearned to meet with them. When the permission was granted to him, he met one of the sisters and told her his story. In the biography of his life, it was written that he went to Tibet in 1929 and suddenly disappeared without a trace. (For a fuller account of his life, please read [his biography here](#).) Actually, Sadhu Sundar Singh said that some murderers killed him. They cut up his body into many pieces and buried them in many places so that no one could trace his remains. That was how he died. He shared this in order to solve the mystery of his disappearance, which up to today, no one knows for sure what happened to him. However, the most important thing he wanted to share was about his ministry. He was a Sikh. God's plan and purposes was for him to lead his homeland to Jesus Christ. God raised him up in order to reveal the light of Jesus Christ to his people, the Sikhs. However, he did not know the ways of God. He did not know that to accomplish the plans and purposes of God, one must seek

the Holy Spirit to reveal God's plans. He only knew how to cry to the Lord Jesus Christ but he did not know how to seek the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the Harvest, and we must pray to Him to send workers into the harvest field. Sadhu Sundar Singh said that because he did not know God's ways nor sought the Holy Spirit to lead him into the plans and purposes of God, he failed to accomplish God's plans and purposes for him. He further said that if he had accomplished the plans and purposes of God, today his homeland, Punjab would be at least 35% Christian. The reason why he was killed was because he had stepped out of the will of God. He was supposed to go back to his homeland and to his countrymen, the Sikhs. However, he went to Tibet and this gave the devil the legal ground to take his life. It was further revealed that his death was not considered martyrdom because he did not follow the will of God. However, the angel did tell the visiting church member that Sadhu Sundar Singh was very humble and open to learning.

It is staggering to note that this departed saint who is still greatly esteemed could have missed God's plans and purposes just because he did not seek the Holy Spirit. Even more staggering is the fact that today, many ministries do not seek the Holy Spirit at all in their work. Whatever "ministry" you are doing, if the Holy Spirit is not guiding you, your "ministry" is no ministry at all. All your work, your sacrifices, your efforts will be rejected. You have missed God's plans and purposes for your life. Rather than be caught up in the hive of activity and carrying on mindlessly to keep your "ministry" going, it would be better to stop everything and seek the Holy Spirit for divine light and wisdom for your work.

Simeon was different. Verse 25 says, *and the Holy Spirit was upon him.* Verse 26 says, *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit..* Verse 27 says, *So he came by the Spirit into the temple.*

Simeon was a layman in Jerusalem and yet, he already had the Holy Spirit upon him. Simeon had a very close relationship with the Holy Spirit. He was not called to any particular ministry. He was not a rabbi nor a Levite. He was not a priest in the temple. He was just a layman. However, he had such an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit "was upon him," "revealed to him," and he "came by the Spirit." Every step of the way, the Holy Spirit guided him. He would move as the Holy Spirit moves him. He would act as the Holy Spirit prompts him. He would speak as the Holy Spirit impresses upon his heart. He was the hand glove of the Holy Spirit. Yet, you would notice that although he was not called to any particular ministry, the Holy Spirit led him to minister to Jesus' parents. Luke 2: 34 says, *Then Simeon blessed them.* He pronounced a blessing upon Jesus' parents. You can be sure that his blessings were not empty words – the Holy

Spirit that was upon Simeon would back up those words of blessings. Many ministers pronounce blessings over their congregation, but unfortunately, most do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit to back up those words of blessings. Hence, those blessings are empty words, and the congregation goes away without any real blessing from the minister at all. However, they do get blessed in other ways since God sees their hearts - if they had prayed sincerely, if they had tithed faithfully, if they had made sacrifices to attend service, if they had stored the Word in their hearts, if they had showed love to one another – all these do give them blessings. Furthermore, Luke 2: 34-35 says, *and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."* Simeon gave this word of prophecy to Mary although Simeon was not a prophet. However, he was so close to the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit naturally used him to deliver this word of prophecy. If you want to flow naturally in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, seek the Holy Spirit and walk with Him closely. The Holy Spirit would then inspire whatever words or works you speak to or do for people. That would be your ministry. Ministry without the Holy Spirit is no ministry at all.

We put before you that every group of people that encountered the Lord Jesus Christ during His childhood would both represent who Jesus Christ would be in His ministry later on and what ministers should be if they want to serve Him.

The group of shepherds that met the Babe Jesus in the manger represents Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. John 10: 11, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

The group of wise men from the east who were kings represents Jesus Christ as the king. John 18: 37, *Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then? Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."*

The group of teachers surrounding the Child Jesus in the Temple represents Jesus Christ as the Teacher. John 13: 13, *"You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am."*

Having seen this, what would Simeon represent Jesus to be? Firstly, in Genesis 29: 33, *Then she [Leah] conceived and bore a son, and she said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his*

name Simeon. In Hebrew, the name *Simeon* means *heard*. Secondly, the Holy Spirit was prominent in the life of Simeon. Thus, Simeon would characterize Jesus' ministry as primarily a ministry of hearing the Holy Spirit. Jesus was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. He healed all those oppressed of the devil. Jesus did not do any of the miracles in the ministry that He did without the Holy Spirit. But, guess what? Jesus did not even die without the Holy Spirit. The birth of Jesus was because the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and the virgin conceived inside of her, Jesus. What was conceived inside of her was through the Holy Spirit. The birth of Jesus had the Holy Spirit. The ministry of Jesus had the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus suffered in the garden with the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not even die or rise from the dead without the Holy Spirit.

What about Anna, the daughter of Phanuel? Her name itself is very instructive. Anna means "Grace" and her father's name, Phanuel means "Face of God." Anna's name, life, and message were one. She was with her husband for 7 years before he died and then, she spent the next 77 years of her life before the face of God in the temple. The name, life and message of "Anna, the daughter of Phanuel" literally means grace born of spending time before the face of God. Her consecration and dedication to God was absolute. Her prayer life and consecration reflect the life of Jesus too.

We want to take note of something else about Simeon and Anna. We see that the Holy Spirit was prominent in their lives. In the case of Simeon, the Holy Spirit "was upon him," "revealed to him" and he "came by the Spirit." Anna was a prophetess, which means, she spoke by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit led them to the Temple at the precise time that the Child Jesus was presented to fulfill the requirements of the law. If Simeon and Anna did not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, they would have missed this event. They would have died without seeing Jesus, the salvation of God. They would have missed the move of God. We want to drive home this point. If you do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, you would miss the moves of God. You would miss the plans of God. You would miss the events of God. As we fast approach the end times, if we do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, we would even miss the Rapture.

In this particular local church whose pastor sends up some of his church members to heaven, one of them was taken by the Holy Spirit to a big city in Mexico to witness some future events. He saw accidents happening all over the place. He saw a man driving a big truck and suddenly, he collapsed at the driving wheel and his truck collided with another vehicle. At the very same time, a captain

at his post manning a ship also collapsed and his ship collided with another ship and there was massive destruction and loss of lives. He also saw a pilot suddenly collapsing and dying while his passenger plane went spinning out of control, with the loss of lives. In another scene, he saw a couple watching television and a man just collapsing in his seat and died. This Christian brother asked the Holy Spirit what is the meaning of all these events. The Holy Spirit revealed that this is the rapture. At the time of rapture, the Holy Spirit will snatch the spirit man of Christians all over the world and take them to meet with the Lord Jesus in the air. There they would be given new bodies to enter heaven while their old and dead bodies are left behind. The Holy Spirit further revealed that only those who have a relationship with Him would be taken up in the rapture. About 25% of born again Christians would be caught up in this rapture while the rest will have to go through the tribulations. Those left behind are deemed disobedient and rebellious, who refused to heed the counsel of the Holy Spirit and change their ways. During the time of tribulations, Christians would be hunted down like animals and they would suffer all manner of torments and killed in cruel ways.

Most end time teachers teach that Christians would suddenly disappear in the rapture. You would not find their bodies on earth. However, this is not true. They would suddenly die on the spot when the Holy Spirit snatches their spirit man away. Their unsanctified bodies would not be able to stand the presence of God's glory in heaven. Thus, they would be provided with new and glorified bodies for life in heaven. Simeon and Anna represents all those Christians who spend much time before the face of God and are "just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon" them. They would be ready for the Rapture and Jesus' coming in the clouds just as Simeon was ready to lay his eyes on the Messiah when Jesus' parents brought Him to the Temple.

III. The Child Jesus at Home with the Three Wise Men

In the third recorded incidence, Jesus was a young boy between one to two years old when the three kings came to lay their gifts at His feet. *And when they had 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 gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.* (Matthew 2: 11)

It did not say *a young baby*. The wise men have come to pay homage to the child Jesus and the scene was in a house, not at the manger. Jesus was no more in the manger. Sometimes, the Christmas pageant narrates the story of the three wise men coming to visit the baby Jesus in the manger. The Bible says they saw the young

child. By the time the three wise men arrived, the child Jesus was about one to two years old. That is why Herod killed all children under two. The time the wise men saw the star to the time they reached Jerusalem took two years. That was how long they took looking for Jesus. From the East when they saw the star to the time they arrived at Bethlehem, Jesus had grown. You do not expect Jesus to remain a baby all the time. Even today, people think Jesus is just a little baby in a manger, fragile and needed to be protected. You do not need to protect Jesus. In fact, Jesus is the one who is going to protect you. He is no more in the manger. He is on the throne. When John the apostle saw Him, he fainted. He had not seen this Jesus before in such glory, such power in the book of Revelation. That is where Jesus is. If your god is a god whom you need to carry and take care then that god cannot take care of you. You got to take care of your god. However, a God whom we really need is a God who is bigger than us. We do not carry our God. God carries us. The Bible tells us we dwell in the secret place of the Most High God. He protects us. He shields us. He is a God we can run to in every need and every problem.

The wise men fell down, worshiped Him, and opened their treasures. They presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then they were divinely warned to depart by another way. By the way, the Bible did not say there were three men. How the number of three wise men is arrived at is the three types of presents given to the child Jesus.

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

Gold points to the worship of God in the beauty of holiness; frankincense to the power of the resurrection and myrrh to the fellowship of His suffering. Gold was used for vessels in the Holy place and in the Holy of holies. God demanded that only pure gold is used in the making of Moses tabernacle and Solomon's temple. Gold is a symbol of the worship of God in the purity and holiness of heart. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Gold is able to survive the fire. The Apostle Paul uses this analogy when he writes to the Corinthian church concerning Christian works, *"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this*

foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work." (I Corinthians 3:11-13)

Job is the man in the Bible who was perhaps the most sorely tested man of all time. He lost all his worldly possessions, his children had died, and his health was gone, his friends made his burden heavier by trying to lay a guilt trip on him, and his wife advised euthanasia. But in the midst of his suffering, listen to what he says, *"He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* (Job 23:10)

In a wonderful Messianic passage in Zechariah, there's a prediction and a promise: *"In the whole land," declares the LORD, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'*" (Zechariah 13:8, 9)

The Laodicean church's members had become lukewarm in their relationship with God. Jesus' message is, *"I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."* (Revelation 3:18)

Peter gives a different slant on this, because he points out that there is something which, like gold is refined in fire, but unlike gold, this other substance never perishes. *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (1 Peter 1:6,7 6)

Peter points out that there is something more valuable than gold, or even the testing of gold - it is the process whereby our faith is tested and strengthened, the adversities, sorrows, hardships, trials of this life which test and strengthen our faith which will hold us through eternity. Notice this about faith, it grows, and bears fruit, unlike gold, which, as enduring as we think it to be, will nevertheless someday perish.

Frankincense is a very costly and fragrant gum distilled from a tree that is found in Persia, India and Arabia, as well as the East Indies. It is a white resin or gum, and is obtained by slitting the bark of the "Arbor Thurisfrom," and allowing

the gum to flow out. The word actually means "whiteness," referring to the white colored juice which flows out of the wound in the tree. This gum hardens for three months, and is gathered at the end of the summer, and sold in the form of "tears," or clumps of hardened resin.

Frankincense is highly fragrant when burned, and was, therefore, used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. *"Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. (Exodus 30:7,8) "He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain."* (Leviticus 16:12).

Frankincense and myrrh are two of the ingredients used to prepare the anointing oil of Moses in the book of Exodus. Frankincense is also used in its pure form to be placed upon the twelve loaves of bread on the table of showbread in the Holy place in Moses tabernacle and Solomon's temple and they were changed once a week. Frankincense has some qualities to preserve that bread. It symbolizes the redeeming resurrecting power of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also symbolizes in that sense the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. See in redemption and in resurrection, it can only take place when a higher realm of authority takes dominion over the lower law of sin and death. It is when the law of the Spirit of life, Zoe, supercedes the law of sin and death. In gold, we see cleansing and purity. In frankincense, we see life and righteousness. Gold speaks about the purifying and cleansing process. After we are have been put into the fire and the dross comes up to the surface and removed, we become clean vessels. Now God takes His life, takes His resurrection power, and takes His righteousness and now He puts it into us. That is frankincense. Therefore, gold represents the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus to purify us from sin. Frankincense represents the power of Jesus to pour Himself, His life and His righteousness into us so that we be like Him.

The primary lesson from frankincense is that our worship is to be pleasing to God. Remember, this sweet smelling resin comes as the result of the tree's wound and pain. When we can worship God in the midst of our sorrow, our brokenness, then it is a sweet smelling offering. That's why David said, *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."* (Psalms 51:17)

Much emphasis in worship today is on "celebration." No time for agonizing and

tears, only for shouts of joy and victory. While joyful praise is acceptable to God, tears, like frankincense resin, oozing out of our hurts, broken hearts, and tears of repentance are especially pleasing - a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord. Anyone can dance and shout when their team is winning, and everything is going their way. But true worship happens when it must overcome feelings of self-pity, fear, and doubt.

I have always been a bit mystified by this idea in the Old Testament that God wants a "sweet smelling sacrifice." In the book of Leviticus, at least 16 times reference is made to the offerings being a "sweet savor". And when God pronounces His judgment on unfaithful Israel in Leviticus 26:31, He indicates that He will turn away from their offerings. *"And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors."*

Do you really think God cares about the smell of the smoke? We might care - it would not be very pleasant to attend a worship service where there is the horrible smell of burning flesh filling the air. So maybe it was for the benefit of the people that the burning of frankincense was instituted. On the other hand, God is interested in the condition of our hearts when we pray and worship Him. Is it with sweetness, or without of a sense of duty, or even bitterness because we do not feel that God is dealing with us fairly.

Myrrh speaks about suffering. In the Jewish custom, the bodies of the dead were anointed with myrrh and aloes. (That the body of the Lord was anointed with such things, and was encompassed with them, together with a linen cloth, and that this was the custom of the Jews, may be seen in John 19:39, 40; Luke 23:53, 56.)

Myrrh is an aromatic gum produced from a thorn-bush that grew in Arabia and Ethiopia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. This thorny tree, called "balsamodendron myrrha", is similar to the acacia. It grows from eight to ten feet high, and is thorny. When it oozes from the wounded shrub, myrrh is a pale yellow color at first, but as it hardens, it changes to dark red or even black color.

However, if frankincense represents sweetness, myrrh represents bitterness, at least to the taste. In fact, the name itself was given to it on account of its great bitterness. The Hebrew word is similar to the name given the waters that were bitter when Moses and the people were coming out of Egypt. *"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was*

called Marah. (Exodus 15:23) Hear also what Naomi says to her daughters in law - *"Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.* (Ruth 1:20)

It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving them from putrefaction (John 19:39). It was much used in Egypt and in Judea. It was at an early period an article of commerce, (Genesis 37:25) and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, (Exodus 30:23). It was also used as an agreeable perfume (Esther 2:12; Psalms 45:8; Proverbs 7:17). For many of the ancients, myrrh was considered to be a favorite perfume, said to keep its fragrance for several hundred years when kept in an alabaster pot. Myrrh also had medicinal qualities, sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Savior, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, (Mark 15:23; Matthew 27:34).

It's also interesting to note that the Greek word for myrrh, "smurna", is the same as the name of the city and church which received a letter from the Apostle. Smyrna was the second of the seven churches of Asia that John was instructed to write to in the early chapters of the book of Revelation. This church was distinguished by it being persecuted (Revelation 2:8-11) - they understood the bitterness of being mistreated for the sake of the Gospel.

Myrrh then is brought as a gift to acknowledge the human suffering that Jesus partook of when He came into our world. Why did He refuse the drink? Because He had already drunk it. He had prayed at first that He could be spared the cup, but then He submitted to His father's will and drank it - the bitter cup of His suffering.

We too drink from the cup of suffering, and it is bitter. Knowing that He drank it too, and in a fuller amount than we can ever comprehend, helps give us courage to go on. But may we, like the Magi of old, also bring this as a gift to Jesus.

We bring gold to honor Him as King, and to yield to the purification process of the fiery trials. We bring frankincense to worship Him even in the midst of our brokenness.

And we bring myrrh to recognize that He has identified with us in our pain and sorrow.

The Three Wise Men

The picture of the shepherds praising the Baby Jesus lying in the manger reveals the secret of workers becoming true shepherds that will flow with the anointing to do good, and heal all that are oppressed by the devil. Likewise, the picture of the three wise men or kings from the East offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Child Jesus reveals the secret of men attaining to kingship and sitting down with the King of kings on the many thrones in heaven. Not everyone is given to sit on the thrones with Jesus. It is given to those who have overcome. To be worthy to sit with the King of kings, one has to constantly offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Him, not literally but spiritually speaking. These gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh means the purity, the righteousness and the suffering respectively that one must work out in one's life with the help of the Holy Spirit as an offering to the King of kings. There must be the gold of purity, the frankincense of righteousness, and the myrrh of suffering and dying in one's life to be worthy to be made a king and to sit with the King of kings on the thrones in heaven. The Bible calls them "wise men from the East" (Matthew 2: 1). To produce a life of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we need wisdom. We need to seek Wisdom, walk with Wisdom and speak with Wisdom. Wisdom is a person. Wisdom is not just wise sayings. Wisdom is Jesus Christ. Wisdom is the Holy Spirit. Walking in wisdom means walking with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the place was the home. The Bible mentions that the wise men visited the Child Jesus at home. It was at Jesus' house that the kings offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The home represents one's private life. It is in one's private life that one cultivates a life of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

By the way, who are these three wise men? Where are they from? Interestingly, a local Chinese pastor recently sent up some of his church members in the Spirit to heaven at the direction of the Holy Spirit. This was another learning experience for the church. These church members were brought to see Mary in heaven and they were prompted to ask Mary what race these wise men were. Mary told them that they were three Chinese kings, one from the north of China, the second from the east of China and the last from the south of China. They were guided by ancient writings that the Messiah would be born in the west. The star that they saw in the sky, which led them to Bethlehem, was actually made up of six huge, bright angels traveling together. The journey from China to Bethlehem took two years, which explains why when they arrived, Jesus was around that age. That explains why Herod killed all children below two years, as that was the time between the birth of

Jesus and the arrival of these Chinese kings. In this particular visit to heaven, these church members were made to understand that because of these Chinese kings' visitation to the Child Jesus, God was pleased but Satan was furious with the Chinese race. He stirred up much strife, warfare, and bloodshed in the Chinese kingdom to exterminate the race. However, the more Satan tried to do that, the more God prospered the Chinese race and multiplied it to become the most numerous race. It was like how Pharaoh tried to exterminate the Jewish nation in its land by killing all the male babies. The more the Egyptians tried to kill the Jewish babies, the more God multiplied their race and they grew very mighty (cf. Ex. 1: 19)

On hindsight, we could understand why God was pleased with these three Chinese kings. They came from a faraway land. They looked to the promise of the Messiah based on ancient writings. They were kings themselves but they would acknowledge the King of kings. They undertook an arduous and difficult journey. They brought gifts to the King of kings. They had very little light from the ancient prophecies yet by great faith and tenacity, they made the journey. They saw the boy Jesus, who by all outward appearances, looked like another common Jewish boy. However, their faith made them acknowledge that He was the Messiah. Contrast the attitude of these Chinese kings with the attitude of the Jews. The Jews had all the light from the prophets and the Old Testament regarding the coming of the Messiah. They lived in the vicinity and proximity of the birthplace of the Messiah. They saw the great star shining in their land. They were expecting the Messiah around that time. They even knew that Bethlehem would be the place of the birth of the Messiah. Despite all these, they did not even bother to find the Messiah when He was born nor prepared for His coming.

These church members were also made to understand that China would feature very prominently in the end times. There is a spiritual battle over China. On one hand, because of these three Chinese kings' visit to the Messiah, God is pleased and has regard for what they have done. He is causing a mighty revival among the Chinese in China. It is estimated that there are at least 100 million Christians in China as a result of revival fires spreading from village to village. For this reason too, Satan wants to use China to hit back at God. Satan had planned this ahead of time and this is one reason why the Chinese has such an attachment to the symbol of dragon in their land. Satan has planted the symbol of the dragon in the Chinese culture. It is somewhat a cultural masking of the whole nation to accept that the dragon is a symbol of good and prosperity but in the long run, it is to make the Chinese nation play into his demonic plans. Some Christian churches invite Chinese cultural troupes to perform dragon dances in their church compounds during the

Chinese New Year services or special occasions under the guise of enculturation. Normally, after a dragon dance is performed in a compound, there will be a spiritual dragon encircling and dominating the place as its own territory since an official welcome has already been given to the dragon. Such Christian churches do not know what abomination they are committing. Kathleen Baxter visited hell and she said that she saw the serpent circling around hell. The serpent and the dragon are manifestations of Lucifer.

Even in these times of impending economic recession in the new millennium, where many countries are reporting lower or negative economic growth rates, China is experiencing a tremendous boom time. Actually, Satan is behind China's strong economic growth while causing the other nations to experience negative growth and recession. Satan wants China to prosper in order to enable them to grow strong militarily and to stockpile military hardware for the last showdown of man's history.

IV. The Boy Jesus in the Temple with the Teachers of the Law

The fourth recorded incident was when Jesus was 12 years old. Luke 2: 40 *And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him.* Luke 2: 46, *Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.*

You would notice that in the life of the Child Jesus, there is a progression from being "strong in spirit," followed by being "filled with wisdom," and then being filled with the "grace of God." With these three characteristics, He was able to engage in a dialogue with the teachers that simply astounded them. This episode reveals the secret of strong biblical teachers who flow with wisdom and revelation.

Remember, every childhood episode of Jesus reveals the secret or birth of different aspects of servants of God. The Babe in the manger being worshipped by the shepherds reveals the secret of becoming true shepherds. The visit of Simeon and Anna at the temple reveals the secret of hearing the Holy Spirit and standing before the face of God. The visit of the three wise men reveals the secret of becoming overcomers and kings. Now this dialogue of Jesus in the Temple with the teachers reveals the secret of becoming true teachers of the Word.

First, the Child Jesus grew and became "strong in spirit." Herein lies the secret. Before you can be filled with wisdom, your spirit man must grow strong to be able to absorb wisdom. Wisdom is Spirit and your spirit man must be strong to be able

to retain Wisdom in your spirit man. When your spirit man has a clear conscience and is sensitive and been constantly exercised by praying in the Spirit, your spirit man receives spiritual substances to grow strong. The three functions of the spirit man are conscience, communion, and intuition. These three functions can only grow strong when you are in constant fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

If you sideline the Holy Spirit, and you think you can grow strong spiritually by yourself, you are sadly mistaken. You can never get anywhere spiritually without the Holy Spirit. You may read the Word, confess the biblical promises, claim your rights by faith, pray, fast twice a week, intercede but if all these are done without inquiring of the Holy Spirit and seeking His counsel, you are merely wasting your time. You will not achieve much spiritual breakthrough despite your doing much of these spiritual exercises. The Holy Spirit is merely watching you from the sidelines but is unable to help you because you did not inquire of Him. You did not invite Him. You thought you could do it yourself. In fact, you are afraid to ask the Holy Spirit because you fear that He would suggest something to you that you may not like, your flesh finds it hard to die and yield to, or you simply want your own way. The Holy Spirit will step aside and will let you have your own way but you will not make much progress spiritually. After years of doing spiritual exercises your own way, you find you have very little progress and breakthrough.

In fact, I would say that if you had been doing spiritual exercises your own way without consulting the Holy Spirit, at the end of the day, you would be proud, puffed up and Pharisaic in attitude. You would look down and despise others who are not of your class. You would think you know more than others. Actually, what has happened is that you were doing your spiritual exercises in a fleshly way. Your spiritual pursuits were inspired by carnal and fleshly desires for recognition and worldly fame. This is an abomination to the Lord. The devil has deceived you. He has planted seeds of deception in you. You thought you were super-spiritual. Normally, such people go around creating a lot of strife and confusion because they give prophecies, revelations, and visions from the flesh. What is born of the flesh is flesh. In the Charismatic world, you will find many of these kinds of people because they seek the Charismatic gifts without seeking the Holy Spirit.

Powerful ministers of God who flow in the real anointing and the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit may have inspired them. Seeing such anointed ministers of God, some people entertain ideas of fame, and recognition and therefore, they seek the gifts without seeking the Holy Spirit. When such people sideline the Holy Spirit by not fellowshiping with Him, the Holy Spirit can only stand aside and watch them. Such people are on dangerous grounds. In many cases, their ancestors may have

dabbled with the occult and developed powerful witchcraft abilities. These abilities are carried down to the descendants through their bloodline and will remain dormant in them in “chips” form. When these people start seeking and exercising the so-called gifts of the Holy Spirit without a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the devil activates the “chips” in them and suddenly they flow in these inherited witchcraft abilities. They have become the devil’s agents planted in churches to destroy the churches from within. They have all the outward appearances of being good ministers but in the long run, by their fruits you will know them.

They can tell the future, and the undiscerning thinks they are prophesying. They reveal knowledge about you and you think they have the word of knowledge. Actually, they have a spirit guide masquerading as the Holy Spirit. Their spirit guide will communicate with the demon accompanying you, and your demon will reveal your secrets to that spirit guide, who will in turn inform them. To the undiscerning eye, they appear like the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Normally such an activated devil’s agent will have a network of demons at his disposal without his knowledge. They will cooperate with one another to bring about false signs and wonders to promote that person’s so-called “ministry.”

Scripture is clear on the matter of obeying and disobeying the Holy Spirit. When you obey the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will work in and through you. Acts 5: 32, *And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.* If you disobey the Holy Spirit, the devil will work in and through you. Ephesians 2: 2, *in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*

You can distinguish the true ministers from the false ministers by this acid test. Observe their lives and ministries carefully. See whether they are under control of the Holy Spirit; they are constantly walking in the Spirit; they won’t do anything without consulting the Holy Spirit; they bring any idea and program and decision to the Holy Spirit; they won’t say or do anything unless they know the Holy Spirit has given or permitted them; there is uprightness in their walk; there are tangible results after they said the Holy Spirit has told them to do this and that and they do accordingly. If the answers are positive, they are the true ministers of God. If the answers are negative, then you know they are false ministers.

Growing spiritually is a matter of fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit and yielding to Him constantly. The Holy Spirit is your trainer and your coach. He knows your weaknesses and strengths. He has a personal development plan for you. He has

goals for you to achieve. He knows the Father's will for you. He will draw up your personal prayer life. He will tell you when to go into worship or when to put your petition before the Lord of Heaven. He will lead you to specific passages in the Word in line with your personal spiritual development. You grow strong in spirit by constantly sowing to the spirit realm. What is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Many students preparing for the ministry make a fatal mistake of putting the cart before the horse. They seek for teachers before seeking the Teacher, who is the Holy Spirit. Notice that before the Child Jesus was in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions (Luke 2: 47), He grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2: 40). Jesus grew strong in spirit by constantly fellowshiping and yielding to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was His Teacher. Remember, in heaven, Jesus has already divested Himself of His divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence before He entered the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was as helpless as any newborn baby. He still has to grow in knowledge as any other child. However, He knew how to listen and yield to the Holy Spirit and thereby, grow strong in the spirit. He progressed by becoming strong in spirit, then filled with wisdom, then filled with the grace of God before finally going to the temple to seek the teachers. Probably many of these teachers were men of great repute, famous teachers, famous authors, teachers that any ordinary Jew would stand in awe. They are the equivalents of famous teachers and authors today that people are running after. However, these Jewish teachers stood in awe of the Child Jesus because Jesus was taught by the Holy Spirit, and not by mere men. Luke 2: 47, *And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.*

This is where many Bible students and seminarians preparing for the ministry make this common mistake. They buy up many books to read, hear many tapes, go for one seminar after another, run after famous men and women of God, subscribe to their magazines, read their Bibles and even memorize whole passages but failed the one most important thing – seeking the Holy Spirit as Teacher. In the end, they wonder why they have no power in their preaching and in their ministry. Actually, most of them would be very smug and satisfied with their own preaching but they know not what they lack. They have all the theological degrees and doctorates but they have no wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Then they come across a poor uneducated Christian who is always on his knees, seeking for God's wisdom and truths. They are astounded to find this poorly educated Christian speaking one truth after another – truths they never heard of, truths they themselves took so long

to find out, truths they finally found after so many hard knocks and mistakes and failures – and this guy is just pouring these truths out like living water. This guy depended on the Holy Spirit whereas the others depended on men's teachings.

I once read in church history about a very famous professor of theology in Europe during the middle Ages. I forgot his name. He used to hold his audience spellbound simply because he could quote long passages from the Bible and from church fathers by memory. One day, he happened to meet an ordinary layman and asked him how his preaching was. That layman took him aside and patiently taught him the truth from the Word of God. He taught this mighty professor where he had gone wrong, where he was missing the mark, where he was inaccurate, and this astounded him. He resigned from his post and submitted himself to this layman who taught him how to allow the Holy Spirit to teach him. His resignation caused a great consternation in the hall of academicians and theologians. They despised him too for associating with and learning from an unlearned layman. In the end, he was vindicated when he moved powerfully in the realm of truth and revelation that stirred a great revival in his country.

Paul also had a similar experience. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the most outstanding teacher at that time. He was above his peers in terms of intelligence, brilliance of mind, learning, zeal for the law and was carved out for a very illustrious career as a rabbi. He may have been seen as the most likely successor to Gamaliel. All this ended when he met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 and said that he considered all his learning as dung compared to the supreme knowledge of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord. He then went to Arabia to sit at the feet of the Holy Spirit for three years and the result was most outstanding. He wrote one third of the New Testament and released much revelation for us.

Bible graduates should take an example from Paul. They should go away and sit at the feet of the Holy Spirit for a few years.

When I was in school, I was an average student. Later, I went to the seminary. If you had heard me preach when I was in the seminary, you would have gone to sleep. After seminary, I started preaching. I did not preach like I do now. Back then, I was following the crowd and preaching like the rest of them. I thought you must shout, holler, and preach fire and brimstone. There is a lot of hot air, hype and clichés but little substance in such preaching. Later, when I preach the truth extracted from the Word, I found it had a greater impact on the congregation.

After I was expelled from the Baptist seminary in Penang, Malaysia for “practicing extreme Charismatic practices” according to the letter I received from the administrator of the seminary, I began to seek the Lord. The Lord showed me a vision of my spirit man that looked skinny, oppressed by thousands of demons pressing against me. Although I was getting high grades in my seminary subjects but spiritually, I was underdeveloped. High grades and degrees will not get you anywhere spiritually. When I got out from that vision, I determined to do two things: pray in the Spirit for long hours and meditate on the Word for long hours.

Something happened when I started doing both of these. When I fellowshipped with and prayed in the Spirit for long hours and meditated on the Word for long hours, in the ninth month or so, suddenly there was a burst of light and understanding that came to my mind on the Word that I never saw before. The light began to work in my soul and spirit that I did not fully understand then. However, one thing I do know: the Holy Spirit and the Word imparts wisdom. The Bible declares in Ps. 119:99-100, *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.*

During those 30 years, Jesus had to learn the Word of God like we learn. Jesus was not born with the knowledge of the Word. He even had to learn the Hebrew or Aramaic language in those days. Jesus had to learn to speak and then He had to learn all the scriptures. That is one point in His life where He is very similar to us. He had to learn like we learn. By growing strong in spirit and by meditating on the Word, the Child Jesus was filled with wisdom.

In addition, you see that *the grace of God was upon Him*. How did the grace of God come? Grace comes through walking in the Spirit and walking according to the Word. If we keep a child away from the pollution of T.V. and wrong videos and feed that child the Word, that child will grow wiser than any other children because the Word will feed his spirit and give him a supernatural wisdom. The Word gives wisdom. The Word produces wisdom. Let me encourage you that the understanding that the Word is sharpened through meditating on the Word of God constantly.

Man uses only about 5 to 10 percent of their brain. The rest is actually wasted. We know one key that can tap on all your full potential of your soul – the Word of God. The Bible tells us in Eph. 4 that in reference to the gentiles who were in sin that they were in darkness. Their souls were darkened because they were alienated from the life of God. That happened in Adam’s time. When Adam fell a light was shut up

from his understanding and we all inherited that darkened mind. Jesus restored that light.

Summary

These four episodes of the childhood of Jesus Christ can be summarized by Isaiah 11:2, “ *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.* The prophet Isaiah was speaking of the coming of the Messiah who would have this seven-fold Spirit of God. This seven-fold Spirit of God is categorized into four classifications:

1. The Spirit of the Lord
2. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding
3. The Spirit of counsel and might
4. The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Since the child in the womb of the Virgin Mary was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, we would expect the seven-fold Spirit of God to be with the Child Jesus as well. In each of the childhood episodes of Jesus, there is a manifestation of each classification of the seven-fold Spirit of God.

Firstly, there is the Spirit of the Lord. This is seen in the visit of Simeon and Anna at the presentation of Jesus at the temple. Simeon and Anna are full of the Spirit. Simeon is a lay believer whereas Anna represents the five-fold ministry. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, who revealed to him the baby Jesus who would be the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles. Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, was a prophetess who spoke by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4: 14). Anna, daughter of Phanuel represents a life of grace born of spending time before the face of God. Simeon represents the life of Jesus who was filled with the Spirit (Luke 4: 1) and came in the power of the Spirit. Anna represents the life of Jesus who was full of grace and truth (John 1: 18). The Spirit of the Lord would lead Jesus to be filled with the Spirit and with grace. This same Spirit of the Lord would enable us to be filled with the Spirit and with grace too.

Secondly, there is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. This is seen in the visit of the three wise men from the east who had the wisdom to seek the Messiah and the understanding to follow the bright light in the sky. They had the wisdom to offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Child Jesus, as this was a prophetic overture to Jesus’ life and ministry. They also had the understanding that the only gifts that are acceptable to the King of kings are the fruit of gold,

frankincense, and myrrh in their lives. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding caused Jesus to produce a life filled with the gold of purity of worship, the frankincense of sweet fragrance of pleasing the Lord and the myrrh of drinking the cup of the Father's will. This same Spirit of wisdom and understanding will lead us also to produce a life of gold, frankincense and myrrh, which would also qualify us to become overcomers and kings.

Thirdly, there is the Spirit of counsel and might. This is seen in the counsel given by the angels to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night that the sign would be a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. We have seen that the light that appeared at night and the Babe lying in a manger were the same sign that the Messiah had come into the devil's territory to destroy the works of the devil. With this counsel comes the might. The shepherds rejoiced and worshipped the Babe. The Spirit of counsel and might upon Jesus led Him to preach, heal and deliver under the power of the Holy Spirit. Shepherds would need this Spirit of counsel and might if they are to preach, heal, and deliver as Jesus did.

Finally, there is the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. This is seen in the 12-year-old Child Jesus in the temple, engaging in a question and answer sessions with the teachers of the Law that simply astounded them. Jesus said that He was about His Father's business. From an early age, Jesus was already filled with the fear of the Lord that made His consecration to His Father's business absolute and unwavering. He grew, became strong in the Spirit, and was filled with wisdom and grace. This made Him filled with right knowledge that corrected the faulty knowledge of the teachers of the Law in the temple. When there is right knowledge of God, there will also be the fear of the Lord. The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord in one's life will cause one to be filled with knowledge and the fear of the Lord.