

**Psalm 24 (Opening)**

<sup>1</sup> *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,*

<sup>2</sup> *for he has founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the rivers.*

<sup>3</sup> *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?  
And who shall stand in his holy place?*

<sup>4</sup> *He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
who does not lift up his soul to what is false  
and does not swear deceitfully.*

<sup>5</sup> *He will receive blessing from the LORD  
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

<sup>6</sup> *Such is the generation of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.       Selah*

<sup>7</sup> *Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.*

<sup>8</sup> *Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD, strong and mighty,  
the LORD, mighty in battle!*

<sup>9</sup> *Lift up your heads, O gates!  
And lift them up, O ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.*

<sup>10</sup> *Who is this King of glory?  
The LORD of hosts,  
he is the King of glory!       Selah*

How do we ever know anything about someone if we're not introduced to them?

A lot of times we introduce ourselves by telling someone what our name is and what we do for a living. But that doesn't really tell us who someone is. To really know someone, you need to understand their background; where they come from.

We all have a history. That history is what makes us who we are. It colors our decisions; it impacts how we react to situations. To truly understand how and why someone does something, we need to know their history.

Like I said last week, I'm re-reading a book called "The Jesus I Never Knew" by Philip Yancey. What he tries to do in his book, and what I am continuing with for the rest of this month, is to strip off our preconceived ideas about Jesus, and look at Him the way the people of the first century would have looked at Him. I want to try to understand Him by looking at His history, His background; who He really was.

So, it's a good thing you're sitting down, because I'm going to start with a real shocker – Jesus was a Jew.

Are you surprised? Amazingly, some people are when you tell them that.

Not only was Jesus a Jew, but he was a very devout Jew. And so were his parents. Let's take a look at some of His background and see if we can get a good feel for who Jesus was before He started His ministry.

First off, His family was poor. Take a look at Luke 2:21-24

### ***Luke 2:21-24***

*<sup>21</sup> And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

<sup>22</sup> *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*  
<sup>23</sup> *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)*<sup>24</sup> *and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”*

Why do I say from looking at that scripture that His family was poor? Take a look at the sacrifice they offered to redeem their first-born son; a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Remember that as we look at Leviticus 12:6-8, the part of the Law of Moses that explains how to redeem your first-born.

### ***Leviticus 12:6-8***

<sup>6</sup> *“And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering,<sup>7</sup> and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female.<sup>8</sup> And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”*

Not only was His family poor, but they lived in a small town in the middle of nowhere.

### ***Luke 2:39, 40***

<sup>39</sup> *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.*  
<sup>40</sup> *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.*

Jesus lived with his parents in the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, about 70 miles north of Jerusalem. It's such a small town that Nazareth isn't mentioned in the Old Testament **at all**. The Talmud, the 6200 page long teachings and opinions of thousands of rabbis over the ages never mentions Nazareth either. The fact that the "city" of Nazareth isn't mentioned except in the Gospels makes some people question the validity of the Gospels at all.

Nazareth was such a backwoods hick town that it had a bad name. In John 1:46, when Philip tries to tell Nathanael that Jesus was the one that Moses and the prophets wrote about,

***John 1:46***

*<sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."*

And, in John 7, Nicodemus is talking with some of the Pharisees about Jesus and defending Him, verse 52 is what is thrown back at him.

***John 7:52***

*<sup>52</sup> They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."*

Nazareth was considered a stagnant backwater area of Galilee, which was an area most Jews considered backwards to begin with!

We don't know much about Jesus' childhood. Of course, there have been writings about when Jesus was a child; none of them are included in our Bible today because they can't be verified. Most were written more than 600 years after He was born, and there's no proof that any of it is true. On top of that, most of the stories about what Jesus did as a child show Jesus acting in a way that is not in line with how He lived and taught in the Gospels, so it's unlikely they're true.

We do know that when He was 12 years old He and his family traveled to Jerusalem to the temple for Passover. As the crow flies, it's about 63 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem, over some pretty rough hills, so the trip was probably more than 75 miles, and on foot probably took more than a week, especially with young children in tow.

Let's look at Luke 2:41-51

### ***Luke 2:41-52***

*<sup>41</sup> Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. <sup>43</sup> And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, <sup>44</sup> but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, <sup>45</sup> and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup> And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." <sup>49</sup> And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup> And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. <sup>51</sup> And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*

Have you ever left a kid behind, or been left behind as a kid? It can be a traumatic experience for both the kid or the parent! If you've ever been to Millinocket, there's a store there, well, right now it's just past the McDonalds there in town. It used to be a Grant's. I think it's a Tractor Supply Store or something now. I still have memories of "losing my mother" in that store as a little kid, maybe 5 or 6 years old. Marie and I

went there a few years ago, and I was amazed at how small that store really is, but as a 5 year old, it was **huge**.

Think about how Mary and Joseph must have felt, knowing they had walked for a day back toward Nazareth and not noticed that He wasn't with them! Can you imagine the conversation between them as they headed back to Jerusalem, and looked around the city to try to find Him over the next two days? I'm guessing that Mary didn't get much sleep those nights, worrying about where Jesus ended up at.

Think about what they'd been through after He was born. The strange visitors from a faraway country who brought expensive presents; the dream telling Joseph to take Mary and the baby to Egypt because it wasn't safe where they were, since Herod the Great wanted to kill the unknown baby born King of the Jews so that his throne was safe; then the dream saying it was OK to come back because Herod was dead. Now this!

Where did they find Jesus? At the Temple, involved in rigorous philosophical debate with the teachers there, who were amazed at what He knew. He couldn't have learned it in that backwards town he was from. He was just a hick from up north that wasn't worth anything.

We don't know much else about His childhood. We know Joseph was around at least until after He was 12 years old, because the scripture we just read talked about "His parents". But we don't hear about Joseph again. We know he was a carpenter, or at least a builder of some kind. The Greek word is Tekton. Jesus is referred to as the "Carpenter's son" several times. But after this trip to Jerusalem when Jesus is 12, we don't hear of Joseph again, except in reference to being Jesus' supposed father.

So, let's make an assumption here. Joseph died sometime between when Jesus was 12 and when He was 30. Probably a safe assumption. Does that mean something?

I would say that it does.

It further defines who Jesus was. An unmarried, oldest son would take on the responsibility of taking care of the family once the father is no longer “in the picture”. Jesus would have been responsible for providing for his mother and brothers.

But let me add more to that definition of who Jesus was. He was an orphan, or by the strictest definition of the Greek term, he was fatherless. That made Mary a widow. So, not only were they poor when Jesus was a baby, but things didn't get any better. With Joseph not around, Mary, Jesus, and His brothers and sisters were now the lowest of the low in Jewish society. James, another son of Mary and Joseph, wrote this in James 1:27

### ***James 1:27***

*<sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

But take a look at Psalm 68:5

### ***Psalm 68:5***

*<sup>5</sup> Father of the fatherless and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.*

What better way to be able to explain to people about God's love, than to be the lowest of the low. You want meek and lowly? He was from a place where people were considered uneducated, and possibly even uneducable. He lived in a small town that isn't even mentioned in religious writings until the first century. And add on to all that the fact that He was probably fatherless in the eyes of the world. Widows and the fatherless were unable to support themselves, and relied on support from other people to survive.

Jesus could identify with the down-trodden, the people who followed Him around during his ministry. He knew what it was like. He identified with them.

While I was gathering my information for this week, I had a song come into my head. There's a song by a Christian band called Third Day. The name of the song is "King of Glory". I'd like to share the lyrics of that song with you today.

### ***King of Glory - Third Day***

*Who is this King of Glory that pursues me with his love  
And haunts me with each hearing of His softly spoken words  
My conscience, a reminder of forgiveness that I need  
Who is this King of Glory who offers it to me*

*Who is this King of angels, O blessed Prince of Peace  
Revealing things of Heaven and all its mysteries  
My spirit's ever longing for His grace in which to stand  
Who's this King of glory, Son of God and son of man*

*His name is Jesus,  
Precious Jesus,  
The Lord Almighty,  
The King of my heart,  
The King of glory*

*Who is this King of Glory with strength and majesty  
And wisdom beyond measure, the gracious King of kings  
the Lord of Earth and Heaven, the Creator of all things  
Who is this King of Glory, He's everything to me*

*The Lord of Earth and Heaven, the Creator of all things  
He is the King of glory, He's everything to me*

Now we have a feel for who Jesus was when he started His ministry. He was totally humbled, compared to how He was glorified in Heaven.

This King of Glory, who lived as a lowly human, low even by human standards, is the savior of the entire world.

**Matthew 12:15-21(Closing)**

<sup>15</sup> *Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all* <sup>16</sup> *and ordered them not to make him known.*

<sup>17</sup> *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:*

<sup>18</sup> *“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,  
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.*

*I will put my Spirit upon him,  
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*

<sup>19</sup> *He will not quarrel or cry aloud,  
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;*

<sup>20</sup> *a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,  
until he brings justice to victory;*

<sup>21</sup> *and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”*

## ***Questions***

1. Hebrews 4:15 says “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” How do you think Jesus was tempted before He began His ministry?
2. Have you ever been “lost” in a store as a child, or possibly left a child behind somewhere? How did it affect you?
3. What about Jesus do you identify with the most?