

=LIFE OF CHRIST=

Lesson 4

Christ Begins His Earthly Ministry

INTRODUCTION: For the most part, the years in the life of Christ between His birth and His ministry were private ones. As we learned last week, He worked hard and was a typical child. Now we come to the peak of His ministry when He is thirty years of age.

I. HE WAS BAPTIZED. Read Luke 3:21, 22.

1. His baptism was pleasing to God. In Luke 3:22c, notice the words, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” The Father was saying, “This is My Son, the beloved; I delight that He has been baptized.” It is well-pleasing to God when one is baptized, if that one has already been saved. It is not pleasing when the saved person has not been baptized. (Teacher: Spend some time explaining baptism to the class members. Explain that it is like an X-ray. It is an outward revelation of an inward experience. Stress the importance of the saved pupils being baptized.)
2. Jesus never performed a miracle or did an outstanding work until after He was baptized. He is now thirty years of age, and yet there is no record of His ever having performed a miracle or having done an outstanding work for God. Why He waited until He was thirty, only Heaven will reveal. We do know, however, that after His baptism, He began to do mighty things. No Christian can do his best for God until he is baptized. Baptism is the first step of obedience. In the New Testament, baptism is placed immediately upon conversion. The people who were saved on the Day of Pentecost were baptized the same day. The Philippian jailer was saved and baptized the same night. Lydia was saved and baptized the same day. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 was saved and baptized immediately.
3. Jesus intended for us to get baptized. Notice in Matthew 3:15 that “...it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Notice the word “us.” About whom is He talking? He is talking about all of His people; His entire body of believers should get baptized.
4. Baptism is Christlike. Baptism is, in fact, the most Christlike thing that one can do. There is no way in the world that we can be exactly like Jesus except in baptism. Philippians 2:5 says that we are to have a mind like Christ, but we fail in this, no matter how hard we try. We are commanded to love like Christ, to forgive like Christ, to be humble like Christ; yet no matter how hard we try, we fail. Someone has said that the only thing a person can do exactly like Jesus is to get baptized in water by a Baptist preacher. Jesus was baptized in water by John the Baptist; hence, we are perhaps most Christlike when we are baptized.

II. THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS. See Luke 4:1-13. Immediately upon His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness and was tempted. When one obeys God, then he may expect temptation. It is very inter-esting that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. It is also very interesting that I Corinthians 10:13 tells us, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man...” Here is an encouraging thing. When we are tempted, we can say that Billy Sunday was tempted, too. D. L. Moody was tempted as we are; Charles Spurgeon was tempted as we are. We are all made of clay. We are all faced with the same temptation.

Since Christ was tempted as we are, let us notice how He resisted that temptation. In the first place, He was full of the Holy Ghost. See Luke 4:1. If we are to resist temptation, we must live and walk in the Spirit; we must obey Him; we must follow Him; we must trust Him to lead us to do what we ought to do. Jesus not only trusted the leadership of the Holy Ghost and His fullness, but He also used the Word of God. Notice in Luke 4:4 the words, “It is written...” Notice in Luke 4:8, again the words, “...for it is written...” Notice in Luke 4:12 the words, “It is said...” Jesus used the Word of God to overcome temptations. (Teacher: Stress the importance of staying in the Word of God. Young people, children, and adults alike must live in the Word of God to overcome temptation.)

III. JESUS STARTED HIS MINISTRY AT HOME. See Luke 4:16. He is now going to preach His first sermon. He is going to present Himself as the Son of God and as the Messiah. It is interesting that He walked probably forty miles or more to start at home. It is also interesting to notice in Luke 4:16 the words, “...as his custom was...” His was the habit of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Now

that He presents Himself as the Messiah, He wants to start with His own; hence, He goes to His hometown synagogue. The custom was to stand up to read the Scripture. He stands to read the Scripture, as we see in Luke 4:16b. He sits down to speak. It is a very interesting fact that God wants us to begin our witnessing at home. Jesus instructed the disciples that they should preach the Gospel and that they should begin at Jerusalem. In Luke 24:47, why did He say, "...beginning at Jerusalem"? The reason is that Jerusalem was where they lived; that was their hometown, and He wanted them to begin there. Acts 1:8 says, "...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Again, He admonished them to start at home. In Romans 1:16 the Apostle Paul says, "...to the Jew first...." Why? Because he is a Jew. He wants to get his own first. In Romans 10:1 Paul says that his "prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Notice that his big prayer, his heart's big desire, was that his own people get saved first. When Paul began preaching, he always had a big burden for Jerusalem. That was his home. Win your own loved ones first. Win your own neighbors first. Win the folks in your own neighborhood first, then the folks in your town, then the folks in your area. The New Testament church never sent out a missionary until Jerusalem was filled with the doctrine of Christ. See Acts 5:28, 42. There is no sign of a foreign missionary being sent until the thirteenth chapter of Acts.

- IV. JESUS CARED FOR HIS OWN FIRST. See Luke 4:38-44. Simon Peter is to be the greatest of the disciples, He is to become the spokesman; hence, Jesus begins His ministry by healing Peter's mother-in-law. He cares for those closest to Him. The Lord is telling us that we should win our loved ones first. We should care first for those whom we love the most. We should win our neighbors and care for them first. Jesus begins His earthly ministry by reaching His own.

CONCLUSION: Talk to the pupils about their unsaved loved ones. Ask them if they have tried to win them. Also discuss baptism. The heart of the lesson is baptism and also the reaching of those first who are nearest to us.