

Jesus' Growth in Knowledge

*“By his knowledge
shall my righteous
servant justify
many; for he shall
bear their
iniquities.”
—Isaiah 53:11*

THE WORDS OF OUR opening Scripture are prophetic of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, and they imply that his knowledge had a very important relationship to his work.

Without this knowledge, although he had fully dedicated himself to the doing of his Father's will, Jesus might not have been able to withstand the attacks of Satan, and the misinterpretations of the Scriptures which the Adversary used to try to turn him aside from full obedience. The knowledge which our Lord had at thirty years of age as a perfect man, was that of his miraculous birth, that Jehovah was his Father, and that in some manner he was to fulfill many of the Old Testament promises and prophecies. Following his consecration and symbolic baptism in the Jordan River, and the greater knowledge which subsequently came to him, tests were permitted by the Father to prove his Son's loyalty. From the beginning Jesus was devoted in

his intention and thought. However, we may infer from the Scriptures that there was, at least, a possibility that without the knowledge which came to him, he might not have been prepared to meet the besetments of the way.

This experience is similar to our own. When we dedicate, or consecrate, ourselves to the doing of God's will, we have a sufficiency of knowledge for that step. As we proceed, we are guided into further knowledge, which constitutes part of the grace of God to assist us in making our calling and election sure. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth" and will show you "things to come." (John 16:13) Similarly, the Holy Spirit guided Jesus and revealed to him certain things relative to both the past and the future, making the purposes of God as plain to him as they now are made to us. He understood them better, however, because his mind was perfect, while our minds are imperfect.

LIFE PRINCIPLE TRANSFERRED TO THE HUMAN PLANE

When considering the question as to how and when the man Christ Jesus first came to an appreciation of his prehuman condition, we have no direct revelation. Of one thing we are assured, however, that during our Lord's ministry he had a clear knowledge of heavenly things, as his words indicate. He said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12) Later, he said to his disciples, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" (John 6:62) On the night of his betrayal

he said to the Heavenly Father, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," showing that he had knowledge of his prehuman existence.—John 17:5

In the New Testament, the Greek word *Logos* is used to refer to Jesus in his prehuman existence. In these instances, *Logos* is translated "Word." The record states that "the Word [*Logos*] was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and "the Word [*Logos*] of life ... was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." (John 1:14; I John 1:1,2) The Apostle Paul further tells us that the prehuman Son of God became the man Christ Jesus, that he humbled himself and took a bondman's form and was found in fashion as a man. (Phil. 2:5-8) The Bible says that he laid aside the dignity and honor which he once had, and that he "became poor" for our sakes. (II Cor. 8:9) The necessity of this procedure we see in the Bible arrangement that "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (I Cor. 15:21) Jesus came to be a corresponding price, or ransom, for the first perfect man's life and life-rights. He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death."—I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 2:9

From the foregoing Scriptures we are led to the understanding that the spark of life previously possessed by the *Logos* in the heavenly realm was transferred from the spirit plane to the human plane—"lower than the angels." This spark of life, or identity, was miraculously implanted by the power of God into the womb of Mary, who was a virgin. The child, Jesus, was born like other human children, except that he was perfect, because of the

perfect germ of life from which he was begotten as a human being by the power of God. He would certainly be a very peculiar boy, and wiser than other boys. We read that he not only grew in stature, but in wisdom and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52) Humanity no doubt perceived that he was different from others. The whole matter was pleasing to God, to whom Jesus grew closer as he neared maturity.

A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

When he was twelve years of age, Jesus had, apparently, substantial knowledge. He knew, probably from his mother, that he was miraculously born and that he was different from others. He no doubt had also his mother's explanation that he was to be the "Son of the Highest" and fulfill the predictions respecting the Messiah. (Luke 1:32,33) At this time Jesus perhaps began to inquire—not by way of showing his intelligence, but in sincerity and in truth—whether or not this was the time when he should begin his ministry. While accompanying Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem to keep one of the Jewish feasts, Jesus went to the Temple and sat in the midst of the religious leaders of the Jews, listening to them and asking questions. (Luke 2:46,47) They must have marveled that a child of twelve should think of such things. We may suppose that a dialogue took place, the result of which satisfied Jesus' mind that this was not the time when he should begin his ministry. He did not have this knowledge by any intuitive process, but obtained it by inquiry of the Scriptures and of those who were best versed in them. Thus, the decision was that

his ministry would not begin until he was thirty years of age.

Satisfied with this additional knowledge, Jesus returned home to Nazareth with his mother and her husband Joseph, and was subject to them. (vs. 51) This was his condition until he came to John at Jordan. There is not a suggestion anywhere that he had previously manifested any teaching powers. He was a learner, not a teacher. We may suppose that every Sabbath day he went to the synagogue in Nazareth to hear the Old Testament Scriptures read, to meditate upon them, and to know something of the divine requirements respecting Messiah and the wonderful things prophesied of him.

KNOWLEDGE AT THE AGE OF THIRTY

At thirty years of age our Lord must have had much knowledge which Adam did not possess when he was on trial. Jesus had a knowledge of what sin is and what the penalty for sin is. He knew of the fact that God arranged for the redemption of mankind, to be accomplished through the great Mediator of the New Covenant—a Savior, a Redeemer, a Deliverer. He knew of the divine law written in the Decalogue; of the inability of others to keep the Law, and of his ability to keep it. His mother had most surely told him of his miraculous birth, of the message that had come through Gabriel and of the prophecies of Anna and Simeon. This amount of knowledge would be very valuable to him.

What Jesus evidently lacked was the knowledge of the many details of the Scriptures. While he had not yet received the Holy Spirit, he was much better qualified to understand the Scriptures than

was the fallen race. However, the apostle says that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ... because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Cor. 2:14) It would not be until Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit that he could have a complete understanding of the prophecies and of the types of the Law.

Our Lord did not begin to teach until after he was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Shortly thereafter, he invited his disciples to join him. They were to proclaim the message with very limited understanding—that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and that Israel should try to get near to God, to be prepared for this kingdom when it should be revealed. The power of the Holy Spirit would not come to them until Pentecost. At that time, as it was with Jesus, their eyes would be opened to the many details of God’s plan contained in the Scriptures.

Similarly now, we see that no one is competent to be a teacher in the church of Christ as an elder except he be fully consecrated, and has come under the terms and conditions necessary to the begetting of the Holy Spirit. Apparently the people knew of our Lord’s consecration and dedication to God by his actions and demeanor. However, they evidently were not aware of his anointing by the Holy Spirit. When he was baptized at the River Jordan by John the Baptist, the record states that John “bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. ... And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32,34) If the multitude had seen and heard these things, John would not have needed to “bear record” that Jesus was the anointed Son of God.

ILLUMINATION OF MIND AFTER SPIRIT-BEGETTAL

After his baptism Jesus became conscious of a great change in his relationship to the Father and in his own condition, especially as it related to spiritual things. We read that at the time when John saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus, “the heavens were opened unto him.” (Matt. 3:16) By “heavens” here is meant, not that Jesus was given a telescopic view of things beyond the sky, but that the higher things of God’s plan were opened to him—things which as a natural man he could not receive.

We assume that at the moment when our Lord received the Holy Spirit following his baptism, an impression was made upon his mind which would give him all the particular recollections of his pre-human condition which he did not have prior to spirit begetting. The Holy Spirit, as the invisible power and influence of God, evidently brought to the mind of Jesus a remembrance of the knowledge, thoughts and experiences which he had prior to his being made flesh. Thus was marked the time of our Lord’s spirit begetting, and the preparation necessary for his continued growth in knowledge of heavenly things.

Instead of immediately beginning the ministry for which he had prepared for thirty years, Jesus turned aside into the wilderness and studied the Scriptures for forty days. (Mark 1:12,13) He undoubtedly had many periods of time in his first thirty years of life to think over and meditate upon the Scriptures. However, if he had the same power of understanding before his consecration, baptism and spirit begetting, that he afterwards had, he would not have needed these forty days for study, but would have immediately begun his ministry. Very

evidently, then, all the years of his life on the human plane had brought him no such perception as he now had through the illumination of mind received through the power of the Holy Spirit. He began to have the full scope and appreciation of the mission upon which he had entered, and everything written in the Scriptures respecting the Messiah.

As he now studied the Law and the prophets, Jesus saw the terms of his covenant of sacrifice in the light of this illumination, and the previously hidden meaning of the various Old Testament types and shadows. He began to see that if Messiah would reign it would be by a manifestation of complete loyalty to God and to righteousness. As soon as he was illuminated, he also saw the things pertaining to the suffering through which he afterwards learned obedience in the fullest sense possible. (Heb. 5:8) Thus he received the enlightenment which was so powerful to him, just as it is a great illumination for us to see the terms and conditions of our calling—that we must walk in his steps if we would reign with him. How true it is, then, that the Scriptures act as an enlightening power to those who are taught of God, and only those begotten of the Spirit can understand the real depth of his Word of truth.—John 17:17

Our Lord also understood that the words of the psalmist applied to him: “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea thy law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:7,8) He had already covenanted and pledged to do everything written in the “volume of the book.” Now, however, he was finding out what this really meant—sacrifice, suffering and death, even the death of the cross!

FURTHER ILLUMINATION AFTER SPIRIT BIRTH

We see that when Jesus was raised from the dead as a divine, spirit being, an equally miraculous work must have taken place. Again he experienced a change of nature. The one that was raised from the dead was the spirit-begotten New Creature, having now experienced spirit birth, and having a full record of all his previous experiences, on both the spirit and the human planes.

How, then, did the Father raise our Lord from the dead a spirit being? How also could this spirit being have knowledge of the things experienced in the flesh and also of the things of his previous existence before he was made flesh? We answer that this is impossible to understand, except that it was done by God's divine power. Whatever may have been the operation, after reaching the spirit plane, Jesus' mind must have been stamped by divine power with recollections of both his earthly and his prehuman experiences. Otherwise all of these would have had little eternal value.

We see this also respecting the church. Presently, we are embryo New Creatures, begotten by God's Holy Spirit. If faithful unto death, and raised in Jesus' likeness in the first resurrection, we will not have our limited fleshly minds for recollection. Rather, through divine power, we will be given perfect memory of all the experiences of the present time. We have this thought when we read, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (I Cor. 15:42-44) Divine

power will impress the new spirit body with the knowledge of all the experiences of the present time, so that these shall not be fruitless, but profitable to us, making us better qualified and more able for the divine service, as well as for the carrying on of the work associated with the Messianic kingdom.

THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF GOD

If Jesus had not been found perfect, loyal, faithful, in his prehuman condition, he would never have had the privilege of becoming a man in order to redeem the fallen race. He never showed any defects of character to be rectified, therefore his experiences as a man were given to test his loyalty and obedience to the utmost, under the most extreme and adverse conditions.

Our Lord was faithful under all the favorable conditions of his prehuman condition. He was likewise faithful as a man under unfavorable conditions of suffering and trial. Having been glorified to the divine nature he is still faithful. We may conclude, therefore, that his experiences on these three planes have all cooperated to demonstrate his character to the very highest degree, as expressed in these words of the Apostle Paul. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—Heb. 1:1-3 ■