

# THE PERFECTING OF JESUS

## A short contemplation on our Saviour

Scripture references are to the NIV-UK, unless noted otherwise.

*We do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses,  
but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.  
... Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and once made perfect, became the  
source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

– Hebrews 4: 15; 5: 8, 9 –

---

**OF JESUS' early life** the Scriptures tell us next to nothing. He began full-time preaching at the age of 30 and this lasted just three-and-a-half years, when He was cruelly murdered. What did He do for the first thirty years? How did the preceding decades prepare Him for His ministry of reconciliation, as alluded to in our heading texts?

On the assumption that God does not waste time or effort, we may conclude that the first thirty years of Jesus' life were jam-packed with lessons necessary to the success of His subsequent sacrificial service. He would not have simply whittled away the time prior to His baptism at Jordan.

His life was exemplary, one which brought blessings to those around Him, and preparing Him for the anointing at Jordan – and death on the cross. During His final interrogation He tells Pilate, 'for *this reason* I was born, and *for this* I came into the world', an unambiguous declaration that His entire life had been pursued with purpose (John 18: 37).

### **Jesus As Student**

On this score, it's unlikely that Jesus obtained His academic knowledge without some personal effort, as the ultimate success of His mission depended on His being an 'overcomer' at all levels. The comprehensive understanding that Jesus possessed was not conferred on Him by a miracle.

Commensurate with His growing intellect, He probably improved on His education by taking advantage of opportunities available beyond the immediate family sphere. He might have been largely self-taught, but it is not likely that He learned everything in total isolation. As a faithful Jew, He would pore over the Books of Moses and the Law at the synagogues in Nazareth and distant towns, taking advantage of the libraries available. He reinforced His knowledge in conversation and debate, as He had in the incident at the Temple, when He was just a lad.

Jesus was no doubt educated to the level necessary in matters secular and religious, to a degree sufficient to understand the world in which He would have to function as the Messiah, and in the syntax, structure, interconnectedness, prophecies and principles of the Hebrew Scriptures. We see the results of His studiousness when at the beginning of His ministry He was confronted by the devil in the wilderness. The thrust and parry of Jesus' arguments on that occasion evince His depth of understanding of the Word of God and His infallible memory (Matt. 4: 1-11).

### **Character Development**

During His adolescence and later years Jesus no doubt encountered opportunities to resist

temptation and to cement His character attributes. Heb. 5: 8, 9 (above) establishes the general principle that He *learned* obedience *by the things He suffered*; His character and His understanding were *improved upon* by experience – or, as the *KJV* has it, ‘*made perfect*’ (complete). All this required unremitting determination and devotion to the will of God in the face of opposing forces, human and demonic. And He was *prepared by suffering* to be a merciful and faithful high priest to those would eventually comprise the true church (the Little Flock) (Heb. 2: 14-18).

### **Learning To Pray**

Jesus spent hours alone in fervent prayer, later encouraging His disciples in the same. Perhaps His love of solitude – retiring from the crowd – was cultivated during long sessions of deep study and rambles through the surrounding hills. He read and spoke the common languages of the day – Aramaic (Syriac), Hebrew, Greek and Latin, the language of Rome. Indirect corroboration of this is shown in the fact that the sign tacked to His cross appeared in three languages, meant to be understood by all who passed by (John 19: 19, 20). He acquired an expert understanding in the history and culture of His own people, as well as in Greek and Roman culture.

### ***Who He Was Not***

These aspects of Jesus’ humanity are not addressed by the doctrine of the Trinity, a construct that imposes limitations on the practical interpretations presented here. In evading the force of the argument that Jesus was *capable of improvement* – and, therefore, neither omniscient nor omnipotent as the Second Person of the Godhead – that particular dogma erects a wall of separation between Jesus the ‘100 per cent Man’ and Jesus the ‘100 per cent God’. Such contortion dictates that for the first thirty years of His life Jesus maintain willing ignorance of the fact that He was God. Yet at the age of 12 He called Jehovah ‘father’ (Luke 2: 48, 49). This was surely not a mistake or an immature point of view; He referred to His ‘father’ many times after His anointing by the holy spirit at Jordan, when He became the Christ and the heavens were opened to Him. At 12 and at 30 He knew who *He* was and who He was not.