

## 1 Epiphany 1 – Luke 2

Jesus is God. He knows all things. He controls all things. He holds all things together. All things must obey him. And yet, we hear of Jesus learning, growing, and being obedient. He embraces human flesh and blood as his own. We hear of him embracing a manger for his bed. Then we hear of him when he is twelve years old, staying in the temple and submitting to the teachers of Scripture. And then when his parents find him in the temple, he returns with them and obediently puts himself under their care. That the God of the universe would become a man and be born of a woman is ridiculous enough to this dying world. But that he also submits to his parents and sits at the feet of men, desiring to learn from them, is even more offensive to this age. The world teaches you to shoot for the stars. Don't let yourself be limited by anything. Don't look for the truth outside of you. You can find the truth within your own soul. Submission of any kind is seen as demeaning. Yet here we see the Lord of all doing this very thing. He has all knowledge in himself, but he submits to teachers. He has in himself all authority, but he submits to his parents. It is a stumbling block to many who see themselves as intelligent, free thinking, and even spiritual.

In the early years of the New Testament church, there was a movement that claimed to teach a certain kind of special, super spiritual knowledge. It is known as Gnosticism, which comes from the Greek word for knowledge. Gnostics thought that this true spiritual knowledge came from escaping your body and getting in touch with your soul. Some would forbid marriage, insist on certain strict diets, or push other things they thought were more spiritual. They basically saw the body as a bad thing. This so-called knowledge supposedly comes from liberating yourself from the limitations of your body and this earthly existence. The thought that God would become a man was foolish to them. And the thought that he would also submit to his parents, be obedient, suffer, die, and rise from the dead in his body was even more repulsive to them. Gnosticism has taken on many different forms throughout the years, but this false teaching, which promises some super special knowledge, has been attacking the gospel to this very day. St. Paul warned Timothy about it at the end of his first epistle. He says:

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Turn away from empty, unholy talk and contradictory statements of what is falsely called knowledge. Some claim to have it and have lost their faith. (1 Tim 6:20-21)

The Gnostics didn't like the idea that Christ would humble himself to teachers and his parents. These things only hold you back, after all. If Jesus had power in himself, then he needed to show it off. The Gnostics didn't like the idea that he wouldn't perform any public miracles until he was thirty years old. This is why they came up with different Gospels, which painted a different picture of Jesus. The so-called Infancy Gospel of Thomas, written probably sometime in the second or third century, tells a story of Jesus at five years old controlling the water with his voice, making clay sparrows, turning them into real sparrows, bossing around his father, and killing those who opposed him. He's a super kid, much more entertaining to a world obsessed with power and pride.

Of course, this so-called Gospel of Thomas is a phony Gospel. It claims to give some secret and insightful knowledge by filling in the gaps between Jesus' birth and his time in the temple at age twelve. It talks about his time in the temple when he's twelve years old, and it mostly follows what St. Luke records in his Gospel account. It even says that he became subject to his parents

## 2 Epiphany 1 – Luke 2

and increased in wisdom. But it doesn't portray Jesus as humble. He's portrayed as a boastful little boy, a revolutionary, someone who simply shows off how smart and powerful he is. This may be the Christ that the world wants to hear about. But this is not the Christ revealed in the Bible.

No, the Bible reveals a humble Jesus. He had all power and knowledge in himself. He knew he was the Son of God. He called God his Father. He knew he belonged in his Father's house. The teachers of the law were amazed by his questions and his answers. But Jesus wasn't showing off his knowledge just to show off. Instead, he was revealing something even more profound and amazing. He was revealing his humility. He who clearly knows more than all his teachers, who understands his purpose better than his parents, is clothed in perfect humility and innocence. His response to his earthly parents is not disrespectful in the least bit. "Why were you looking for me?" he says, "Didn't you know I must be in My Father's house?" He doesn't berate his parents for not knowing. He just asks, in simple, childlike innocence, "Didn't you know this?"

Luke tells us that Jesus' parents didn't understand what he said to them. But Jesus doesn't rebuke them. He doesn't start preaching to them and demanding their attention and obedience. He also doesn't need a big pat on the back from the teachers. Instead, he simply goes home with his parents and obeys them.

Jesus grew wiser and taller. He grew in favor before God and people. He won people's approval. He won God's approval. And yet, he always had it. He didn't need to grow wiser. He is Wisdom. He didn't need to grow in his body. He is the creator of the body, the Master Craftsman with the Father. He didn't need man's approval. He is God over all. And he already had the favor of his Father. He has known him and loved him from eternity. So why does he do this? Why does he humble himself like this? Why does he obey?

He did it for our sake. He rendered his obedience all the way to death on behalf of every sinner. He read Scripture, not because he needed to learn it for himself, but because he knew that we need it. We need to learn what the Bible is about. The Bible is about Christ the Savior. It reveals the knowledge of salvation in his flesh and blood, his obedience, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection. This is wisdom beyond all wisdom.

Jesus is not just some wonder kid or superman. No, he is God in the flesh. He never gave up any of his divine powers or wisdom at any time. There is never a time, from the manger to the cross, when Jesus does not know all things. He was always holding every element, both visible and invisible, together. But he was hiding these great powers. He didn't make full use of them at the time. And when he finally began to reveal his glory, it was not for vainglory or worldly praise. Everything he did was out of obedience to his Father to save sinners from the wrath to come.

This world wants knowledge. Adam and his wife wanted knowledge when they ate the fruit God commanded them not to eat. People think that more knowledge is always the answer. They say that everyone has a right to an education. But what kind of education are we talking about? What kind of knowledge? What kind of wisdom? Those who want to know things

### 3 Epiphany 1 – Luke 2

simply for the sake of being in the know or getting a piece of the pie are falling for the same trap the devil set for our first parents. They get puffed up with pride, imagining that they are so insightful. They love the sound of their own thoughts, and anyone who says that they are wrong might as well be attacking their god. Because they worship their own intelligence. Again, this comes in many different forms, but there is nothing new under the sun.

Natural man wants to have knowledge and wisdom without fearing God. But the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Your sin isn't just some physical obstacle holding you back from your full potential. It is hostility against God. Your guilt isn't just a bad feeling stemming from poor mental health or trauma in your life. You aren't a victim before God. No, you are guilty before him. If you don't recognize this, then it doesn't matter how much you think you know. It doesn't matter how learned or educated you imagine yourself to be if you don't fear God and recognize that before him you know nothing.

Jesus came to give us knowledge. But this isn't some high, obscure, and lofty knowledge that you can only get by abandoning your ordinary earthly life. No, the knowledge Jesus gives is down to earth. He left his lofty throne to meet us in our ignorance and misery. This is knowledge of salvation. And it is for you, whether you are watching your sheep at night, raising children, obeying your parents, teaching, learning, or any other earthly duty God has given you. There is no amount of knowledge, wisdom, or spiritual insight that can hold a candle to what Jesus gives to the humble spirit and the broken heart. It flows out of his pierced side, poured over our bodies in the water of baptism, placed in our mouths in his body and blood, and confessed by all his saints, regardless of how intelligent they are or how high of a status they have. Those who are considered wise and knowledgeable depend on others not knowing what they know. Because if everyone knew it, then you couldn't brag about knowing it. But the knowledge of the gospel is much greater than the knowledge of this world. It is the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, the peace of God, which surpasses understanding. And he reveals it to all people regardless of rank or IQ.

To have knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ is to have a clean conscience. It is to have confidence that God does not count your sins against you for Jesus' sake. And it is to be sure that his Spirit will continue to dwell in you through his Word, causing you to grow in the knowledge of Christ. God grant it always for Jesus' sake. Amen.