

Jesus the Carpenter
Joel R. Grassi, Th.D., Pastor

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.” (Mr 6:3 AV)

Perhaps, like me, you find it quite easy to marvel at the deity of Christ. The truth that Christ is God, God the Son, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, the I Am, is perhaps one of the most majestic of all Bible truths. It is a very basic, very foundational truth, and yet it never ceases to boggle the mind that that babe in a manger Who came 2,000 years ago was none other than Jehovah.

Yet, equally as marvelous as His deity is the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ was fully man. That is, He was as much a man, a member of mankind, Adam’s descendent, as you or I, yet without sin. Christ had neither a sin nature nor did He commit any act of sin. And that, of course, is a big difference between us and Him. Yet we perhaps would be surprised to find out exactly how similar to us Christ was as we read of the Bible doctrine of the humanity of Christ.

Christ had two natures – a truly divine and a truly human, and in His human nature He was tempted in all points “like as we are.”

Christ knew what it was to have tears. He wept over Jerusalem and He wept over Lazarus and He wept as He prayed in the garden (Hebrews 5:7).

Christ knew what it was to suffer hunger. Yet isn’t it amazing that the One Who fed five thousand men never performed a miracle to satisfy His own hunger?

Christ knew what it was to suffer thirst, not being ashamed to ask a Samaritan woman for a drink nor refusing the second drink offered him on the cross, the vinegar filled sponge on the end of a stick from a Roman soldier.

Christ knew what it was to need sleep, being so tired as not to be awakened by a great storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Christ knew what it was to live a humble life, not having great possessions nor even a place to lay His head.

Christ knew what it was to be tempted.
Christ knew what it was to be burdened by trials.
Christ experienced the delight of joy.
And He knew the pain of sorrow.

It is my understanding from Scripture that there really is not any aspect of our lives, other than our rebellion against God, that Christ did not in some way experience for Himself.

With these thoughts in mind I hope to highlight an aspect of the true manhood of Christ, of the humanity of Christ, that will prove to be both timeless and timely. I want us today to

notice that the Lord Jesus Christ was a carpenter; that the Lord Jesus worked a job; that Christ was a member of the economy of His day.

The word “carpenter” is from the Greek τέκτων, which has the idea of one who brings something forth. The chief carpenter would be the arch-τέκτων, or we might say, architect. This word appears in I Corinthians 3:10 where it is translated as “masterbuilder.” The root idea appears in Hebrews 11:10 as “builder,” where it says that Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose **builder** and maker is God.” And another form of the word appears in Acts 18:3 as “craft” when speaking of Paul and Aquila and Priscilla as being tentmakers by trade.

The Hebrew word behind it is שָׂרָף, which has the root idea of “to cut.” Obviously, carpentry involves cutting. I remember my dad using the old carpenter’s joke: “I cut it three times and it’s still too short.”

It is interesting that while the Greeks and the Romans had a high view of the intellectual and philosophical occupations, the Jews placed high regard upon the manual labors and trades of the day.

The trade of carpenter is ancient. It is first mentioned by name in II Samuel 5:11 (cf. I Chronicles 14:1) during the reign of King David. We also read that carpenters were involved during the restorations of the temple during the reign of the good king Josiah (cf. II Kings 22:6) and good king Joash (cf. II Chronicles 24:12) and during the ministry of Ezra the priest (cf. Ezra 3:7).

The book of Isaiah records many details about the trade of carpenter. In Isaiah 41:7 the carpenter is described as one who uses a hammer and nails. In Isaiah 44:13 the carpenter is described as one who uses a rule or ruler, who marks his measurements with a line, and who uses planes and a compass. The OT speaks of carpenters in conjunction with smiths. We should note that the carpenters of which Isaiah speaks are condemned by the prophet because they use their trade for idolatry. And this is true with just about any occupation today. One can use his job either for good or for evil. Now I do believe that there are some occupations that a Christian should not hold and could not perform in clear conscience.

Zechariah 1:20 - “And the LORD shewed me four carpenters...” The LORD used the description of “four carpenters” to speak of the four nations that would supplant one another in their occupation of Israel for His purposes. Babylon → Medo-Persia → Greece → Rome. Not only is Christ King of kings, He is Carpenter of carpenters.

There is an offense of familiarity, or, as the saying going, “familiarity breeds contempt.”

First, notice that Mark 6:1 says that Christ “came into his own country.” This is speaking of Nazareth, Christ’s own native land where He grew up. The word for “country” in this verse is *patris*, from which comes the English word “patriarch,” and speaks of one’s own fatherland or the land of one’s father. (*It’s kind of like when I come back to Westchester County.*)

Second, notice in 6:2 that the people who knew Jesus of Nazareth refer to Him as “this man.” The idea of the phrase is brought out well in our Bible: How does **this man**, lowly, common carpenter that He is, have access to **these things**, deep teachings and wisdom, and all

manner of mighty works? Part of it also was that Nazareth was considered to be kind of a dead end town. It didn't produce successful people. There were no great philosophers, no significant political or religious leaders came from Nazareth. And yet here was Jesus of Nazareth, fast becoming the most significant individual of the day.

Third, notice in 6:3 that they refer to Him, in a derogatory manner, as "the carpenter." They know Him by trade and they know Him by family, and their familiarity with Him breeds their contempt for Him. But it's no different for you or I.

There are several aspects of Christ being the carpenter from which you and I can glean truths.

First, Jesus spent precious time investing in the learning of a trade.

The LORD Jesus Christ had a trade, worked a trade, by which means He provided for the financial needs of Himself and those who were with Him.

Carpentry was a popular trade of the day during the life of Christ. It was not an unusual thing to be a carpenter, any more than it was unusual to be a fisherman.

Even before His ministry began, Christ was to be found among the people of His day. When we say that Christ lived a separated life, we don't mean He lived a strange, abnormal life. The young Lord Jesus learned a trade and got a job. He worked the hours that people work. He took a salary. He paid whatever He owed. He lived the normal life that any able bodied man of His day would live.

"In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury (want, lack)." Proverbs 14:23

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." II Thessalonians 3:10. (Note the word "would," not "could.")

Second, the Lord Jesus chose to follow in Joseph's footsteps in the family business.

Cf. Matthew 13:55 – "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

The way to understand the difference between Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 is that the people made both statements, but Mark, because he is choosing, under inspiration, to emphasize Christ as the Servant and therefore identifies the Lord Jesus as being Himself a carpenter.

In the wisdom of God, the Lord Jesus was placed into an earthly family where the father had a good business and trade skill that he could pass on to his children for their benefit.

I was surprised when I discovered that the word "inheritance" occurs in the Bible over 200 times.

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." Proverbs 13:22

“House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.”
Proverbs 19:14

This is not saying that a man works hard so that his children don't have to work at all.

Third, Jesus the carpenter was part of the economy of His day.

As a carpenter the Lord Jesus knew what it was to be part of the economy. He knew very well the ups and downs of the market place. He knew what it was to see carpenters be in demand, and He knew what it was to do other things to supplement His income because the carpentry market was slow.

As a carpenter the Lord Jesus would have understood the relations between employers and employees. No doubt He would have begun as Joseph's employee. Eventually, with Joseph passing on, we can assume that Christ became an employer. This afforded Him a firsthand understanding of the difficulties involved with both ends of the workplace. He understood the individual challenges that face both sides.

The Lord had firsthand experience with the subject of wages. He knew what it was to receive payment at the end of the pay period and perhaps think to Himself, “It would be nice if there were an extra zero on the end of this check.”

As a carpenter the Lord had firsthand experience with the certainty of taxes. He knew what it was to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's, just as you and I know what it's like to “give” Uncle Sam his share. The Lord Jesus Christ was a taxpayer.

And we could go on about how Christ the carpenter was very well versed in the subjects of Debt and debtors, profit and loss, the temptations of greed and the obligation of sharing, and the very real possibility of bankruptcy and foreclosure.

Fourth, Jesus the carpenter would have had an interest in trees / natural resources.

On somewhat of a side note, I want to say that as a carpenter the Lord Jesus would have had a familiarity with and an interest in trees.

All throughout the Bible, the LORD seems very interested in trees. From the tree of life in the garden to the tree with twelve manner of fruit in Revelation, the Bible speaks much about trees.

Since trees are part of God's creation, the Lord would have had a healthy respect for them.

Since trees are part of man's dominion, the Lord would have used them wisely and would not have placed an unbalanced value upon them. A carpenter would be involved in the cutting down of trees.

I say all this to say that Christians should have a Biblical view of earth and its resources. Trees are not be valued over human life. At the same time, trees are not to be wasted needlessly. We shouldn't waste and we shouldn't worship. I do find it interesting that during the Lord's seven year tribulation judgment on earth He takes away one third of all the trees as well as all of the green grass (cf. Revelation 8:7).

Fifth, as the carpenter, the Lord Jesus was an integral part of Nazarene society.

When I say integral I mean that the Lord was integrated among the people of His day not segregated from them. Notice that the text says “Is not this the carpenter?” They knew Him as their carpenter. They were familiar with Him. He wasn’t someone they merely had contact with on the religious level.

Christ as carpenter shows that there really was not a distinction between clergy and laity as we know it today. There is a risk of contempt with this, but this is nonetheless what the believers in the NT did. All throughout the NT epistles of Paul and Peter and James and John you see reference to their physical labor and their honoring of their masters and being good servants. While I do believe their lives radically changed when they came to follow the Lord, I don’t believe they ceased working to meet their physical needs. Paul continued to make tents. Luke was known his whole life to be a physician. The pattern set by Adam in the garden is to be followed by all of Adam’s sons.

Sixth, Jesus the carpenter understood daily emotional and physical demands.

As a carpenter, the Lord Jesus knew the physical fatigue that accompanied hard work. There were no doubt times when His bodily weariness sought to interfere with His spiritual life. There were no doubt Sabbath days when He did not feel like going to synagogue, much the way I don’t feel like going to church when I’m tired and could just as easily sleep in.

There no doubt were times when the Lord Jesus came home exhausted and looked forward to collapsing on His bed in sleep.

On a side note, because of His trade as carpenter, we can be certain the Lord Jesus kept Himself in good physical shape. However you picture the Lord Jesus: tall, short, dark, light, long beard, short beard – one thing is for certain: you don’t picture Him being overweight and out of shape, do you? Why is that? Because deep down inside we all understand that being out of shape is not God’s design for man. I just want to remind us all of this, because we all can be doing something, probably more than we’re doing now, to keep our bodies in better physical shape for the Lord.

“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1Ti 4:8 AV)

Seventh, Jesus the carpenter avoided the love of money.

While His trade provided for His needs, He never built Himself an empire. He never spent His years acquiring masses of wealth and fortune. Cf. Proverbs 23:4 and I Timothy 6:9.

Finally, it is fascinating to think of the things that carpenters in Galilee were known for producing:

Carpenters produced yokes,

“²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.” (Mt 11:29-30 AV)

Carpenters produced ploughs,

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Lu 9:62 AV)

Carpenters produced tables,

“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables;” (Joh 2:15 AV)

“But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me *is* with me on the table.” (Lu 22:21 AV)

“That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Lu 22:30 AV)

Carpenters produced doors,

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (Joh 10:9 AV)

Just as Noah built the ark with one door, so Christ is the one door to safety for your eternal soul

And as a carpenter, the Lord Jesus worked with nails and beams.