In The Shadow of the Cross

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Jesus lived a lifetime in the looming shadow of the cross. He was conceived for Calvary, born to die, begotten for burial and reared for the resurrection. He spent three decades on death row. He was aware of the agony that awaited His body and the anguish that would tear His heart.
We are largely left in the dark concerning His early years. At what point He knew who He was, we do not know, but it must have been early. Mary pondered the things concerning His remarkable birth and early days in her heart (Luke 2:19) and, without doubt, shared them with Him (cf. Luke 2:40). By the age twelve He was "about His father's business" (Luke 12:49).
He grew up reading the prophecies about Himself. He saw His sacrifice implied (Genesis 4:3-5), prophesied (Genesis 22:8), typified (Exodus 12:5) and personified (Isaiah 53:7). On earth, He was identified by John (John 1:29) and verified by the apostles (Acts 8:30-35). Presently He is glorified in heaven (Revelation 5:12-13).

What was it like to grow up in the shadow of the cross? He was not isolated or sheltered from events that depicted His own future.

Imagine Jesus as a Boy Seeing His First Crucifixion
Gary Stanley has recreated what might have happened in "An Imaginary Conversation Between a Boy and Centurion Soldier" (edited).

The legionnaire leaned against his spear to study the boy standing at the base of the cross. The old soldier had handled hundreds of crucifixions, and this one was no different. Every crucifixion had its victim. Every crucifixion had its Roman sanction. Every crucifixion had its audience. The guard was a seasoned student of the expression on each spectator's face. Most feigned disgust and clucked useless sympathies, but their eyes betrayed a morbid fascination. As the day wore on, spectators came and went, but their eyes always seemed the same. By the evening meal only the boy remained. He stood quite still, a bundle of wood at his feet. The guard recognized him; he was a tradesman's son and often travelled the streets making deliveries for his father. Above, the man stretched out on the cross coughed. His beaten face made nonsense of once-delicate features. The dying man looked down into the eyes of the boy and his suffering seemed deeper than expression. Each breath caused muscle spasms through his frame. He swallowed and tried to clear the pounding in his head. the boy swallowed too. This was the first crucifixion he had seen. He took in every detail of the scourged and beaten man. The guard placed a hand on his shoulder. "Pretty gruesome, isn't it?" he said. "This fellow dreamed of being a king, but he is only another revolutionary, an enemy of the state." The youngster made no response. "Why so silent, boy? His suffering is almost over. I know, I've watched hundreds die. Some say that the last few moments are actually euphoric." The boy picked up his bundle and walked silently away. It was nearly dark."

Jesus read His own obituary (Isaiah 53). He knew He would be pierced (Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10) and hanged on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23). He learned of the thirst involved (Psalms 69:21) and the failing of His strength (Psalms 109:4; Isaiah 53:12). He knew He would be betrayed (Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14) and forsaken by His own (Zechariah 13:7). Christ grew up reading about Abraham sparing Isaac but knew that His Father would not stop the "knife from falling" on Him (Genesis 22). He studied the Passover lamb (Exodus 12) and knew that He was the substance of that shadow (John 1:29). He went to

offer His sacrifices and knew that each one was but a figure of His bleeding wounds (cf. Leviticus 1-5; John 3:14-16).

Imagine Jesus as a Boy Seeing His First Scourging

What must He have thought when He first saw a soldier draw back a whip! He knew that His back would one day be bared to the same "cat-of-nine-tails." When He heard the moans of agony and saw the blood pour from the wounds, He was looking into His mirrored future. When He heard the crowd's mockery, He knew He would feel the sting of insult. He must have dreaded being smitten, spat on (Isaiah 50:6), wounded, bruised, and stripped (Isaiah 53:5).

Imagine Jesus Boy Seeing His First Funeral

Later, He ended every funeral He attended (Luke 7:11-15; John 11:43). But, suppose He attended one as a boy. What must have gone through His mind, knowing that He would prematurely die and be laid in a borrowed tomb? He knew that they would be unable to get a big enough rock to keep Him in the grave! He had read that He would be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9), but also that His soul would not be left in Hades (Psalms 16:8-10). He knew that He would be resurrected (cf. John 2:19), ascended (Psalms 68:18; 110:1), anointed (Psalms 45:6-7), and enthroned (2 Samuel 7:12-13). Have you obeyed King Jesus? He asks that you believe that He is the Son of God (John 3:16), turn away from your sins in repentance (Luke 13:3), confess His deity (Matthew 10:32), be buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and live faithfully till death (Revelation 2:10); Titus 2:12)? Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross, that we might live in the shadow of heaven!