

Luke 2:36-52
July 22, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When you've taken your kids on a trip, e.g. the beach, or Disney World, or a park, how hard did you work at making sure your kids were in your sight? [Let people engage]

Q: Can you name a time when your child was missing that caused a feeling of panic? What were the circumstances? When did you realize your child was missing?

Transition: Joseph and Mary were parents just like you. The only difference is that it took them a full day to realize Jesus was not with them! All kidding aside, I think there are some takeaways for us if we focus our attention on Jesus and how He grew spiritually and walked with His Father. It is my hope that **all of us CAN grow spiritually BY following the EXAMPLES Jesus sets for us – even at age 12!** Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.36:

- There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

V.37

- and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

V.38

- Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

V.39

- When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

V.40

- And the **child grew** and became strong; he was **filled with wisdom**, and the **grace of God was upon him**.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.36-37: Luke introduces to another individual. Who is she and what do we know about her? [Anna is a prophetess who has been widowed a long time. We don't know if 84 is meant to signify her age or the years of her widowhood.]

Q V.37: What was her practice? [She never left the temple (practical interpretation is that she was "in church" all day long), but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying]

Observation: Forget that she's a prophetess. I want to meet any woman who worships day and night, fasting and praying! She would be a spiritual giant in my book!! She had a single-minded devotion to God.

Q: Have you met anyone like that in your life? [Let people engage]

Q: What ministry do you see yourself doing at age 84? [let people engage]

Q V.38: What does she do as soon as she sees Jesus? [She gave thanks to God and began sharing the good news with those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem]

Q V.39-40: When the requirements of the Law are met, what does Joseph and Mary do? [They head home to Nazareth, which is a 65-mile trek from Jerusalem.]

Q V.40: What do we learn about Jesus in terms of his development? [He grew physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.]

Transition: If you're like me, there's a curiosity about what was Jesus like as He was growing up as a young "God-man." Apparently, God did not provide that level of detail because it apparently wasn't significant enough for the overall story He wanted Luke to tell. Luke gives us only one story from Jesus's youthful years, which is in the following verses. Would someone read Luke 2:41-52?

[Read Luke 2:41-52]

V.41:

- Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

V.42:

- When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

V.43:

- After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

V.44:

- Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.

V.45:

- When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

V.46:

- After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

V.47:

- Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

V.48:

- When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

V.49:

- "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

V.50:

- But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

V.51:

- Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

V.52:

- And **Jesus grew in wisdom and stature**, and **in favor with God and men**.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.41: What Feast did Joseph and Mary attend every year? [The Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem]

Background: Joseph and Mary were devout Jews who observed Passover in Jerusalem every year. Three times a year the Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem to worship (Deut. 16:16), but not all of them could afford to do so. If they chose one feast, it was usually the Passover; and they tried to take their family with them, for it was the most important feast on the Jewish calendar.

Q V.42: How old is Jesus? [12]

Imagine: I want you to picture yourself with your child at age 12. You are getting the family ready for a 65-mile trek from Nazareth to Jerusalem. You live in a village among other relatives and other Jewish families who will be making this trek with you.

Q: What is the likely mode of transportation? [caravan]

Q: How often are you stopping? [Let people imagine]

Q: How easy do you think it would be for kids to be separated from their parents? [Let people imagine]

People traveled to the feasts in caravans, the women and children leading the way and setting the pace, and the men and young men following behind. Relatives and whole villages often traveled together and kept an eye on each other's children. At the age of twelve, Jesus could easily have gone from one group to another and not been missed. Joseph would think Jesus was with Mary and the other children, while Mary would suppose He was with Joseph and the men, or perhaps with one of their relatives.

Q V.43: When the Feast is over, Jesus's parents head down to Nazareth. Where is Jesus? [He's staying behind in Jerusalem]

Q V.44: I love this verse. Since Jewish families traveled in caravans, Joseph and Mary aren't necessarily concerned that Jesus is not sitting right next to them. What are they assuming? [He's hanging out with his peers in another caravan headed to Nazareth! Cousin Elizabeth could have said, let Jesus come ride with us for awhile.]

Q: It had been awhile since they laid eyes on their son, so what did they do? [They began looking for him among their relatives and friends. Joseph probably thought Jesus was sitting with Mary,

and Mary is thinking Jesus is walking behind the caravans with Dad and some of the boys his age. It's the classic, "I thought he was with you! And I thought he was with you!"

Q V.45: After it became clear that Jesus was not among His family or relatives, Mary and Joseph headed back to Jerusalem to look for Him.]

Q V.46: How long did it take for them to find Jesus? [(3) Days - They had gone a day's journey from Jerusalem when they discovered that Jesus was missing. It took a day to return to the city and another day for them to find Him.]

Q: Where do they end up finding Him? [In the Temple courts sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.]

Q: What do we know about Jesus at age 12 from this verse alone? [He was eager to learn. He listened to the teachers of the law and asked them questions. He was inquisitive.]

Q V.47: What does Luke report in this verse? [Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.]

Background: On the surface, it appears that Luke is saying that "everyone who heard Jesus was amazed at his understanding and his answers, as if Jesus were teaching them. But keep in mind the traditions of Jewish families. At age 13 a Jewish boy became obligated to observe the Law. In today's time, the Jewish people have a celebration called the Bar-Mitzvah, which means a "son of the covenant." So Jesus most likely is demonstrating His amazing retention of knowledge of all the Laws that I'm sure He was learning while listening and asking questions!

Q V.48: When Mary and Joseph finally find Him, what was their initial reaction? [Astonished – Greek is *exeplesan*, "struck out of their senses"]

Q: What do you think "astonished" them? [The text is unclear, but an educated guess is that they may have seen Jesus expressing wisdom beyond His years to the teachers of the Law.]

Q: What does Mary and Joseph ask Jesus once they found Him? ["Why have you treated us like this?"]

Q: Is that the first question you'd ask your 12 yr-old if you found your child after three days? If no, why do you think this is the question asked of Jesus? [Let people engage]

Q: What feeling were they dealing with until they found Jesus? [Anxiety; Great distress (in the original language, the word for "great distress" is used in Paul's concern for lost Israel (Rom 9:2) as well as the pain of lost souls in Hades (Luke 16:24-25)]

Q V.49: How does Jesus respond to His parents? ["Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"]

Q: How did Jesus know He should be in His Father's house? [Because of his divine sonship, He already knew and understood that His mission was to do the will of the Father.]

Q: Do you think He was being respectful to His parents based on how He responded to Mary and Joseph? [Yes, I think he was being matter-of-fact]

Q V.50: Even after he responded to His parents, did they understand him? [No]

Q: Do you have any hypothesis as to why they didn't understand? After all, Mary experienced Gabriel's angelic message, the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus, and prophetic pronouncements. It seems like there would be some level of comprehension. What do you think? [12 years had transpired. They observed over a decade of raising a boy without experiencing the supernatural nature of their son.]

Q V.51: Luke makes it a point to state that Jesus went back to Nazareth with his parents and was "obedient" to them. Why was that important point? [Luke didn't want us as readers to misinterpret his response to his parents. We should conclude that he was respectful and honored his parents.]

Q V.52: Finally, what do we learn about Jesus as a child? [He grew and became strong; filled with wisdom, and the grace of God. God's favor on His Son must have been evident.]

LOOK:

All of us have the privilege of serving our Father by pursuing His will, while learning all we can about His Word and building a more intimate relationship with Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 179–180). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Anna (vv. 36–38). Her name means “grace,” and she was a godly widow of great age. There are forty-three references to women in Luke’s Gospel, and of the twelve widows mentioned in the Bible, Luke has three (Luke 2:36–40; 7:11–15; 21:1–4; and note 18:1–8). It isn’t difficult to see the heart of a physician in Luke’s presentation.

Widows didn’t have an easy time in that day; often they were neglected and exploited in spite of the commandment of the Law (Ex. 22:21–22; Deut. 10:17–18; 14:29; Isa. 1:17). Anna devoted herself to “serving God by worship” through fastings and prayers. She moved from the tribe of Asher and remained in the temple, waiting for the appearing of God’s promised Messiah (see 1 Tim. 5:3–16).

God’s timing is always perfect. Anna came up just as Simeon was praising the Lord for the Child Jesus, so she joined in the song! I would like to have heard these elderly people singing in the temple! Their praise was inspired by the Spirit of God, and God accepted it. But Anna did much more than sing; she also spread the Good News among the other faithful members of “the remnant” who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. The excitement began to spread as more and more people heard the Good News.

Anna was a prophetess, which meant she had a special gift of declaring and interpreting God’s message. Other prophetesses in Scripture are Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), Hulduh (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and the wife of Isaiah (Isa. 8:3). The evangelist Philip had four daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:8–9).

The Youth (Luke 2:39–52)

Having obeyed the Law in everything, Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth, which would be our Lord’s home until He started His official ministry. There were many Jewish men with the name Jesus (Joshua), so He would be known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 2:22); and His followers would be called “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5; see Matt. 2:23). His enemies used the name scornfully and Pilate even hung it on the cross (Matt. 21:11), but Jesus was not ashamed to use it when He spoke from heaven (Acts 22:8). That which men scorned (John 1:46), Jesus Christ took to heaven and made glorious!

What did Jesus do during the “hidden years” at Nazareth? Dr. Luke reports that the lad developed physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually (Luke 2:40, 52). In His incarnation, the Son of God set aside the independent use of His own divine attributes and submitted Himself wholly to the Father (Phil. 2:1–11). There are deep mysteries here that no one can fully understand or explain, but we have no problem accepting them by faith.

Jesus did not perform any miracles as a Boy, traditions notwithstanding, because the turning of water into wine was the beginning of His miracles (John 2:1–11). He worked with Joseph in the carpenter shop (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3) and apparently ran the business after Joseph died. Joseph

and Mary had other children during those years (Matt. 13:55–56; John 7:1–10), for the “until” of Matthew 1:25 indicates that the couple eventually had normal marital relations.

Luke gives us only one story from our Lord’s youthful years. Joseph and Mary were devout Jews who observed Passover in Jerusalem every year. Three times a year the Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem to worship (Deut. 16:16), but not all of them could afford to do so. If they chose one feast, it was usually the Passover; and they tried to take their family with them, for it was the most important feast on the Jewish calendar.

People traveled to the feasts in caravans, the women and children leading the way and setting the pace, and the men and young men following behind. Relatives and whole villages often traveled together and kept an eye on each other’s children. At the age of twelve, Jesus could easily have gone from one group to another and not been missed. Joseph would think Jesus was with Mary and the other children, while Mary would suppose He was with Joseph and the men, or perhaps with one of their relatives.

They had gone a day’s journey from Jerusalem when they discovered that Jesus was missing. It took a day to return to the city and another day for them to find Him. During those three days, Joseph and Mary had been “greatly distressed” (Luke 2:48, “sorrowing”). This word is used to describe Paul’s concern for lost Israel (Rom. 9:2) as well as the pain of lost souls in hades (Luke 16:24–25).

It is worth noting that Luke’s phrase “Joseph and His mother” (Luke 2:43) suggests the Virgin Birth, while the phrase “Thy father and I” (Luke 2:48) indicates that Joseph was accepted as the legal father of Jesus (see Luke 3:23). To use Luke 2:48 to disprove the Virgin Birth is stretching a point.

Whether Jesus had spent the entire time in the temple, we don’t know. It certainly would have been safe there and the Heavenly Father was watching over Him. We do know that when Joseph and Mary found Him, He was in the midst of the teachers, asking them questions and listening to their answers; and the teachers were amazed at both His questions and His answers.

Mary’s loving rebuke brought a respectful but astonished reply from Jesus: “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49) It can also be translated “in the things of My Father,” but the idea is the same. Jesus was affirming His divine sonship and His mission to do the will of the Father.

The word must was often on our Lord’s lips: “I must preach” (Luke 4:43); “The Son of man must suffer” (Luke 9:22); the Son of man “must be lifted up” (John 3:14). Even at the age of twelve, Jesus was moved by a divine compulsion to do the Father’s will.

Since Jesus “increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52), we wonder how much He understood God’s divine plan at that time. We must not assume that at the age of twelve He was omniscient. Certainly

He grew in His comprehension of those mysteries as He communed with His Father and was taught by the Spirit.

One thing is sure: Joseph and Mary didn't understand! This was a part of the pain from "the sword" that Simeon had promised her (Luke 2:35), and no doubt it happened again and again as the boy matured. Years later, during His ministry, our Lord's family didn't understand Him (Luke 8:19–21; John 7:1–5).

Jesus is a wonderful example for all young people to follow. He grew in a balanced way (Luke 2:52) without neglecting any part of life, and His priority was to do the will of His Father (see Matt. 6:33). He knew how to listen (Luke 2:46) and how to ask the right questions. He learned how to work, and He was obedient to His parents.

The Boy Jesus grew up in a large family, in a despised city, nurtured by parents who were probably poor. The Jewish religion was at an all-time low, the Roman government was in control, and society was in a state of fear and change. Yet when Jesus emerged from Nazareth, eighteen years later, the Father was able to say of Him, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

May the Father be able to say that about us!

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 209-210)

(3) Anna's thanks to God. 2:36–38. This godly woman from the prophetic tradition continued the work Simeon had started. Anna **was 84** years old and had devoted herself completely to the Lord's service in **the temple** since her husband had died years before. She announced **to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem** (cf. v. 25) that the Messiah had come. The word about Jesus was likely known throughout the entire city as people either believed or disbelieved the words of the old prophet and the widowed prophetess.

e. Jesus' growth in Nazareth (2:39–40).

2:39–40. **Joseph and Mary** then **returned** with Jesus to their home in **Nazareth of Galilee**, about 65 miles north of Jerusalem, where Jesus **grew** up. Luke omitted Jesus' sojourn in Egypt from his account (cf. Matt. 2:13–21) since it was not his purpose to show the early rejection of the Messiah. In Nazareth He was first rejected after He publicly declared that He was the Messiah. The preparation for His ministry took place in that town as He continued to grow up. Luke noted that He **became strong** and **was filled with wisdom** (*sophia*). His growth in wisdom was mentioned later (Luke 2:52). Luke also portrayed Jesus as the Source of wisdom for His followers (21:15). Jesus had **the grace** or favor (*charis*) **of God ... upon Him**. Luke also reiterated that characteristic in 2:52. The wisdom and favor from God were evident before He reached the age of 12.

f. Jesus' visit to the temple (2:41–50).

2:41–50. By the time Jesus was 12 years old, He understood His mission on earth. As was their custom, Mary and Joseph went yearly to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of the Passover. The one-day Passover was followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 23:15; Lev. 23:4–8; Deut. 16:1–8). The entire eight-day festival was sometimes called the Passover (Luke 22:1, 7; John 19:14; Acts 12:3–4). On the return home from their trip to Jerusalem, His parents did not realize He was not with them until they had gone some distance. After three days they found Him in the temple courts. The “three days” refer to the time since they had left the city. They had traveled one day’s journey away from the city (Luke 2:44); it took them a second day to get back; they found Him on the following day. When Jesus was found, He was interacting with the teachers of the Law, listening and asking intelligent questions. Everyone ... was amazed (existanto, “beside themselves in amazement”; cf. 8:56) at His understanding and His answers. When Mary and Joseph saw Him, they were astonished (exeplogēsān, “struck out of their senses,” perhaps with joy; cf. 4:32; 9:43). In response to Mary’s question about why He had treated them in this manner, Jesus drew a sharp distinction between them and God, His true Father (2:49). His statement confirmed that He knew His mission and that His parents also should have known about His mission. However, His parents did not understand this.

g. Jesus’ continued growth (2:51–52).

2:51–52. Luke was careful to point out that Jesus was obedient to Joseph and Mary in case his readers would think otherwise from the previous paragraph. Mary treasured all these things in her heart, reflecting on and remembering her 12-year-old’s words, even though she did not understand them. Perhaps Luke received these details about the early years of Jesus from Mary herself or from someone in whom she had confided. Jesus continued to grow (proekopten, lit., “cut one’s way forward,” i.e., “increased”) in every way (spiritually, mentally, and physically) and had favor with God and men (cf. v. 40).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1516). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

2:39 It is difficult to reconcile the birth narratives in Lk and Mt, each of which seems to know nothing of the events of the other. They agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and later moved to Nazareth with His parents. In order to integrate the two accounts, the record in Mt of the flight to Egypt must be placed between Lk 2:38–39. The visit of the wise men may also have occurred here. If it occurred before Jesus’ temple dedication, Herod took at least a month from his encounter with the wise men to realize he had been tricked, which is not unreasonable. Both birth narratives highlight themes important to their respective authors. Matthew highlighted both Joseph’s role as a righteous, adoptive father through whom Jesus obtained Davidic lineage, and the recognition of Jesus as the true King of the Jews in opposition to Herod. Luke highlighted both the role of marginalized characters, women and shepherds, in the joyful recognition of the messianic Savior, and the significance of Jesus for Gentiles as well Jews.

2:42–51 Verses 49 and 51 show that Jesus was not intending to be disrespectful of His parents. At age 12 He had a strong sense of His paternity, and He anticipated that His parents would have the same sense. But, despite the announcement of His birth, 12 years of normal family relations had passed, and this sudden revelation of Jesus' self-consciousness probably brought a flood of confusion to Mary and Joseph about their roles as parents and about Jesus' relationship to them.

Stein, R. H. (1992). Luke (Vol. 24, pp. 118–124). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

2:36 There was also a prophetess. Being a prophetess, Anna recognized the child and Jesus' salvific role. Just as Simeon's righteous and devout character qualified him to give reliable information concerning Jesus, so Anna's prophetic role and piety (2:37) qualified her in a similar way. She clearly was a reliable spokesperson for the reader. Why Luke made mention of her coming from the tribe of Asher is unclear, but it does lend credence to the story. See comments on 13:19.

She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. Whether "eighty-four" is meant to signify Anna's age or the years of her widowhood is uncertain. Judith was devout (Jdt 8:4–8) and lived to be 105 years old (Jdt 16:23). While of historical interest, this question is of no exegetical importance. Whether Luke sought to portray Anna here as a prototype of the Christian widow is also uncertain.

2:37 She had never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. The reference to Anna's age indicates her long and single-minded devotion to God. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:6) and Simeon (2:25), Anna was devout and righteous and a model for the believer. "Night and day" corresponds well to the Jewish reckoning of time since a day began at sunset (cf. Acts 20:31; 26:7). This expression should probably not be pressed to mean twenty-four hours a day, i.e., she lived in the temple, because women were not normally allowed to stay in the temple during the night. It is best therefore to interpret it in the popular sense of *all the time*, i.e., she was "in church" all day long (cf. 24:53).

2:38 She gave thanks to God. This serves as an example of model Christian behavior.

Looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. The "redemption of Jerusalem" (cf. 1:68, "redeemed his people") serves as a synonym for the "consolation of Israel" in 2:25 (see discussion there) and "salvation" in 2:30. The references in 2:25 and here serve as an inclusion and bracket the Simeon and Anna accounts.

2:39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord. Luke portrayed Joseph and Mary as models for his readers. They, like Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:6), kept the law blamelessly. This is not a simple historical anecdote that has no value for the reader. Rather Luke sought to show that this was how Theophilus and the other readers should live.

They returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. With this comment Luke prepared his readers for the following account in 2:41–52. Luke did not mention a visit to Egypt as we find in Matt 2:13–22, but such a visit would have to be placed between Luke 2:38 and 2:39.

2:40 In comparison to the account of John the Baptist's growth in 1:80, which contains a twofold description ("grew and became strong in spirit"), this verse gives a fourfold description of Jesus ("grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him").

This again shows that Jesus was greater than John. Instead of a reference to Jesus' becoming strong in spirit, Luke made mention of Jesus as full of "wisdom." This prepares us for the following account, where Jesus' wisdom is displayed (cf. 2:46–47, 52; cf. also 4:22; Acts 6:3) and perhaps highlights the Spirit's coming upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22). Compare 1 Sam 2:21, 26; 3:19.

The Lukan Message

Within this passage two major Lukan theological emphases can be seen. The first involves the ethical behavior Luke was commending to his readers. We find several ethical models in this passage, and they were all commended by Luke because they keep God's law. Joseph and Mary, whose behavior hitherto has been portrayed most positively, kept the ritual law by submitting their son to the circumcision rite (2:21) and by having Mary and Jesus fulfill the rites of purification and redemption (2:22–24). They did what the law required (2:27). In fact, they did "everything" the law required (2:39). Likewise Simeon is described as righteous and devout (2:25), and the reader at this point assumes that he was so because he observed "all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly" (1:6). Anna also portrays the best in OT piety, for she was always worshiping in the temple, fasting, praying, and giving thanks (2:37–38). Significantly Luke referred to the law four times in this passage (2:22, 23, 24, 27, cf. also 2:29 [rhēma, "thy word," RSV]). He clearly believed that the OT is still operative as a guide for Christian behavior. True piety in the kingdom is basically no different from true piety in the OT period. The God of Abraham is the God of Jesus Christ and the God of Peter and Paul as well. The behavior God sought from Abraham is the same behavior he was seeking from Theophilus.

There is also an emphasis in this passage on Mary's child. Even as the circumcision and naming of John the Baptist is followed by a revelation of what he would do (1:76–79), so Jesus' circumcision, naming, and consecration is followed by a revelation of what this one who is greater than John would do. Jesus is clearly portrayed as the object of Israel's fondest hopes and dreams (2:25–26, 29–32, 34, 38). Mary's child is the long-awaited Christ (2:26) who would bring about the fulfillment of Israel's dreams, i.e., their consolation (2:25), salvation (2:30), glory (2:32), and redemption (2:38).

A number of other Lukan themes are also alluded to in this passage. These include the activity of the Holy Spirit (2:25–27); the fulfillment of various prophetic hopes (2:26, 29, 38); perhaps a reference to God's visitation of the poor as evidenced by the sacrifice offered by Mary and Joseph (2:24); and a brief comment about the universal offer of the gospel (2:32).

(3) The Boy Jesus in the Temple (2:41–52)

41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. **42** When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. **43** After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. **44** Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did

not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Context

With this account Luke ended the infancy narrative (1:5–2:52) in the temple where it began (1:5–23). Just as the previous account portrayed Jesus as having fulfilled the Jewish law by his circumcision and redemption (2:21–40), so here he is portrayed as trained in the law (2:46–47). There has been a great deal of speculation about whether 2:40 may have been the original conclusion to the infancy narrative and whether this passage was a later insertion into the account by Luke. As it now stands, however, the account concludes the infancy narrative, and in it Luke portrayed Jesus’ awareness of his unique relationship to the Father. Because of that relationship, Jesus must be in his Father’s house. Later in 9:51–19:28 Jesus would again go to Jerusalem, and again it would be at a Passover. The form of this account is that of a pronouncement story in that its goal and culmination come in the concluding statement or pronouncement by Jesus in 2:49. This is the first such story in the Gospel.

The existence of other stories concerning the unusual abilities of great men in their youth says nothing about the historicity of such stories but only of the fact that there exists a natural interest in information concerning the childhood and youth of famous people. Today historians are often interested in the early years of famous people in order to understand how and why they developed into the people they became. What were the childhood experiences that caused them to become the kind of people they were? Luke had no such purpose in mind. He sought rather to show that Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, was already aware of his being Christ and Lord, or better yet the Son of God, when he was twelve.

The setting of our story is Jewish and the history-like quality of the account becomes immediately apparent when one compares it to the stories found in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas or the Protevangelium of James. The present account foreshadows Jesus’ future greatness as well as his future teaching mission and reveals an awareness of his unique relationship with God. It forms a fitting transition to Jesus’ ministry in 3:1ff.

Comments

2:41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. “Went” is an example of the iterative imperfect which indicates that Jesus’ family habitually went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. “Every year” further emphasizes this. Passover was one of the three annual festivals Jewish men were required to celebrate in Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). Passover itself was the opening feast of the seven-day (or eight-day by another reckoning) festival called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and was celebrated on the fifteenth day of Nisan. The entire feast, however, was popularly called the Feast of Passover (cf. Luke 22:1; John 13:1). Passover commemorates God’s deliverance or exodus of his people out of Egypt and the death angel’s passing over Israel’s firstborn. In this last plague the death angel visited Egypt’s firstborn. However, when he came upon the households of Israel, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the door lintels and “passed over” those homes. Passover could not be observed annually by Jews living in the Diaspora since it had to be observed in Jerusalem. This verse and the next indicate that Joseph and Mary, as devout Jews, sought to celebrate the festival yearly in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Sam 1:3, 7, 21; 2:19).

2:42 When he was twelve years old. At the age of thirteen a Jewish boy became obligated to observe the law (Nid. 5:6; Nazir 29b) and in more recent years has begun to be called a “son of the covenant—Bar-Mitzvah.”

According to the custom. Compare Luke 1:9; 22:39.

2:43 After the Feast was over. That is, after seven days (cf. Lev 23:5–6).

While his parents were returning home. For “parents” see comments on 2:27.

Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. Luke did not tell us whether this was intentional or unintentional on Jesus’ part, and this was ultimately irrelevant for his purpose.

But they were unaware of it. Since Joseph and Mary were traveling in a caravan of pilgrims, they assumed that Jesus was with the other children (cf. 2:44) and did not notice that he was missing until evening when the people in the caravan would come together again as family units. Although later interpreters speculated about where they stopped that night, how large the group was, and so forth, Luke showed no interest in such details.

2:44 They traveled for a day. A day’s journey was about twenty to twenty-five miles.

2:46 After three days. We probably should not see in this temporal designation a reference to the resurrection because when Luke referred to the resurrection, he used the expression “on the third day” (9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40). This expression probably is to be understood (as in 25:1; 28:7) as simply a temporal designation, i.e., after the first day of travel from Jerusalem, they returned back on the second day to Jerusalem; and they found Jesus on the third day. Luke was not interested in such details about where Jesus spent the first and second nights, for this was irrelevant to his purpose.

In the temple courts. The temple plays a central role in Luke's Gospel. See Introduction 7 (2).

Sitting among the teachers. Luke did not use the term "teachers of the law" ("scribes" in the RSV) here, since this has a negative connotation in his Gospel. This scene may foreshadow Jesus' future teaching ministry (Luke 19:47; 21:37–38) as well as the ministry of the early church (Acts 4:2; 5:25).

2:47 Everyone who heard him was amazed. Jesus' wisdom (cf. 2:52) caused Israel's leading teachers to be amazed. No doubt Luke wanted his readers to see in this incident the unique wisdom of God's Son. This amazement is caused by the wisdom of his understanding as revealed by both his questions (2:46) and answers (2:47). We have already seen the response of "amazement" in 2:18, 33, and this was a favorite word of Luke's (see comments on 2:18). Since this amazement is frequently the result of an encounter with the supernatural (cf. 8:56; 24:22; Acts 2:7, 12), Luke may have intended his readers to see in this incident a supernatural display of wisdom. (Cf. Acts 9:21 for the same reaction to the witness of Saul of Tarsus.)

2:48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. The object of their astonishment is uncertain. Their astonishment may have been due to their seeing Jesus' wisdom as manifested in the scene described in Luke 2:46–47.

Your father and I. For Luke this did not contradict the account of the virginal conception in chap. 1. "Your adopted father and I" would be most awkward, and it would be unnecessary since his readers would interpret this saying in light of chap. 1. See comments on 2:27. Luke actually chose the wording carefully, for he was preparing his readers for Jesus' saying in the next verse.

2:49 The culminating verse of this account lies not in the comment concerning Jesus' wisdom in 2:46–47 but rather here in Jesus' pronouncement. This pronouncement shows Luke's readers that Jesus possessed a unique relationship with God and confirms the angelic message that Jesus is God's Son (1:32, 35).

Why ...? Didn't you know? Some have sought to see in these words an accusation by Jesus' parents of deception or betrayal on the basis of such passages as Gen 12:18; 20:9; 26:10, but this seems too subtle and would not have been perceived by Luke's readers. Why were Joseph and Mary surprised by this incident in light of the miraculous announcement of Jesus' birth (1:26–38), the angelic message (2:1–20), and the prophetic pronouncements (2:21–40)? Mary, despite all these indicators, seems to have been uncomprehending of just who her son really was. Such a failure to understand is also found in the disciples (cf. 9:44–45; 18:31–34; 24:25–26). We should remember, however, that some twelve years had transpired between this event and what had preceded. In the meantime the lack of other stories like this suggests that Jesus' "silent years" were quite normal. After over a decade of normalcy the supernatural nature of their son and his destiny broke in on them again. As a result they were surprised and once more needed to reflect on these

things (2:19, 51). Also possible is that the confusion of Jesus' parents here involved not so much the identity of their son, i.e., his divine sonship, but rather how his sonship was manifesting itself.

Why were you searching for me? This can be understood in two ways: (1) Why were you searching all over for me? Didn't you know I would be in the temple? (2) Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I must be in my Father's house? The latter (which focuses on the why) is more probable than the first (which focuses on the where), since it better fits the thought of the rest of this verse. It is unnecessary to see in this a rebuke or accusation on Jesus' part. Rather it is better to see this as an expression of surprise. It assumes that Joseph and Mary, due to their previous experiences as recorded in chaps. 1–2, had a basis for understanding Jesus' unique behavior and relationship to God. The "me" and the "I" in the next phrase are emphatic.

I had to be. There is a strong sense of divine causality present here in this verb (*dei*). See Introduction 8 (1).

In my Father's house. Literally *in the of my Father*. This can also refer to the "things/affairs" or "people" of my Father, but it is best understood as "house of my Father" due to the parallels in 6:4 and 19:46, where the temple is referred to as God's house. (Cf. also John 2:16, where in the temple cleansing Jesus called the temple "my Father's house.") The fact that Jesus was found in the temple (Luke 2:46) also supports this interpretation. Compare 10:22; 22:29; 24:49, where Jesus referred to God as "my Father."

2:50 But they did not understand. In the past attempts have been made to preserve Mary, the mother of God's Son, from this lack of understanding; but such attempts do violence to the text and lose sight of the contrast between Jesus' wisdom and understanding as God's Son (2:40, 47, 52) and his parents' lack of understanding. Similar misunderstandings occurred throughout Jesus' ministry (cf. 4:22; 9:45; 18:34; 24:5–7, 25–26, 45) and would only be remedied by the resurrection.

2:51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them. This is the reverse of "went up" in 2:4.

And was obedient to them. Luke probably emphasized this in order to avoid the misconception that Jesus was disobedient to his parents in this incident. The use of a paraphrastic ("was being obedient") adds emphasis to the assertion.

But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Compare 2:19 and also 1:66.

2:52 Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God. Luke provided his readers with a concluding summary of the years between this event and Jesus' baptism. Compare 1:80 and 1 Sam 2:21, 26 for similar statements concerning John the Baptist and Samuel, and cf. Luke 2:40 concerning Jesus' earlier years. Some scholars have seen a reference to this commendation in 3:22. For a similar statement concerning the development of Jesus' character, see Heb 5:8–9; 2:14–18.

And man. In Luke the majority of the Jewish people are portrayed as responding favorably to Jesus. See comments on 4:15.

The Lukan Message

The main theological emphasis of this passage is Christological. Long before Jesus began his public ministry, Luke revealed that he was aware of his unique relationship to God. Already at the age of twelve he knew that he was God's Son and that he possessed a unique calling. He demonstrated a higher allegiance to his divine sonship than to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:49), although because he kept the law he would be obedient to them (2:51). This is no adoptionist Christology from below but one from above. Before his birth Mary's child was already Lord (1:43) and Son of God (1:35), and this was affirmed by the twelve-year-old Jesus (2:49) and would soon be affirmed by God (3:22).

Along with the "person" of Mary's son, Jesus' role as teacher (cf. 2:46; 4:20–27; 5:3) and the centrality of Jerusalem and the temple may also be alluded to in this account. See Introduction 7 (2). One other possible emphasis found in this passage is the equating of true piety with the keeping of the law. We find this in Jesus' parents' yearly celebration of the Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem (2:41), in Jesus' training in the law (2:46–47), and in his obedience to his parents (2:52).