

July 6, 2025

“The Boy Jesus in the Temple”
Lesson 1

Luke 2:41-52

Intro

Luke’s gospel is the only one that tells us anything about Jesus’ youth. He records Mary’s interaction with Gabriel about her upcoming pregnancy, and the announcement to the shepherds, which lead them to search Jesus out. Luke writes that “Mary treasured up all these things...in her heart.” It seems likely that Luke, writing a history of Jesus and not being one of Jesus’s disciples, got a lot of his information from Mary.

Mary and Joseph made yearly trips to the temple in Jerusalem, as was expected by the Law (see Ex. 23:17 and 34:23). They initially took Jesus to the temple to present Him as their firstborn son and to offer the prescribed purification offerings. As an adult, He prepared to celebrate Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread with his disciples (see Luke 22:7-8). He would have continued to make yearly journeys to Jerusalem, just as he did during his youth with his mother and father.

Read Luke 2:41-52

1. vs. 41: Jesus learned obedience to the Law from His parents

Mary and Joseph go to the Festival for Passover every year

Nazareth, where they lived, is about 70 miles north of Jerusalem

Not impossible, but certainly not without challenge time-wise

2. vs. 42: Jesus is 12 years old in this account

At age 13, Jewish boys are considered adults who will need to follow the law

At age 13, a boy would have a *bar mitzvah* ceremony, marking his becoming an adult

Being 12, Jesus is not yet an adult, so must attend the Festival with His parents

3. vs. 43: The Festival of Unleavened Bread is seven days long, happening right after Passover

So the two are always together, back-to-back, on the calendar—8 days of celebration

Those who traveled long distances usually traveled in large groups

These groups were usually extended families or clans

The large group was protection against robbers, and allowed for pooling resources

Mary and Joseph would likely have thought Jesus was with other members of the group

Luke says Jesus “stayed behind”

It sounds like a deliberate choice, but He could have missed their leaving time

Either way, it is significant that Jesus is not with His parents when they left

4. vs. 44: A day’s journey is 15-20 miles

They are this far (walking!) before they realize Jesus isn’t in the group anywhere

They know this as they look for Him among the “relatives and friends” in the group

5. vs. 45: They head back to Jerusalem to find him, likely the next morning

After walking 15-20 miles, it was likely evening when they discovered His absence

6. vs. 46: The three days is likely counting the travel time
So 1 day travel from and one day back to Jerusalem
The third day they searched the city until they found Him
This isn't specifically stated, but seems a likely time-line
Josephus, the Jewish historian, estimated about 2.5 million people visited Jerusalem during
Passover week
Even after the Festival week ended, there would have been many still in the city
Jesus was at the temple, but it's bigger than we think of when we think "church"
The temple courtyards alone covered at least 25 acres of area
It would have taken a long while to search the entire area
Jesus is with the teachers, the experts of the Law of Moses
He is sitting with them, asking them questions
This is the posture and behavior of a student who seeks to learn
He is both listening and asking questions, a mark of one seeking to know
7. vs. 47: The people who heard Him were "amazed" at what He said
He understood what was being taught, based on His answers
He showed intelligence; He was able to delve deeper with questions of His own
He was only 12 years old, and from rural Galilee
Yet He was able to sit with teachers and answer and discuss deep spiritual topics
8. vs. 48: Mary and Joseph are shocked at Jesus also, but not for the same reasons as the others
They are "astonished"
This is likely either because they found him, or because he had behaved irresponsibly
Mary asks the question that many parents would: "Why have you treated us this way?"
For Mary, this shows she is both anxious and fearful about what has happened to Jesus
Mary also mentions that she and Joseph ("your father") have been anxious in their search
9. vs. 49: Jesus' answer shows the wisdom He would display as an adult when asked tough questions
He answers that He "had to be" in His "Father's house"
The "had to be" indicates fulfilling God's plan or purpose
Jesus stayed behind because He had to: He was doing what God needed Him to do
His response indicates that He didn't think Mary or Joseph should have worried about Him
They should have known where He was and what He would be doing
From the beginning, Jesus knows His life is guided by God's plans for Him
10. vs. 50: It is interesting that neither Mary nor Joseph understood what Jesus meant by what He said
Mary was told He would be God's son by the angel
They are like Jesus' disciples, who also didn't understand what He meant by what He said
They were with Him daily for 3 years, and still didn't get it
Mary and Joseph knew from birth that Jesus was not an ordinary child
Yet still they didn't understand
11. vs. 51: Jesus wasn't being defiant in what He said in vs. 50
This verse says He went with them, and was obedient to their will
He shows them respect and honor in following what they ask Him to do

12. vs. 52: As Jesus grows older, He acts in ways that gain Him “favor with God and man”
This indicates that in all areas of his life, he showed outstanding behavior
These would include his mental, physical, and spiritual aspects

Application: This account shows Jesus following the will of God, even when doing things that were surprising or confusing to the people around Him. It also shows Jesus’ devotion to His family. He was brought to Jerusalem each year to learn the expectations of how to follow and worship God. In return, He shows respect to His earthly parents, despite knowing He was the Son of God. Jesus would become the Savior of all people, even those who don’t always understand what He’s doing. But God’s people can look at what Jesus did to know what God is doing. If following Jesus, we might just end up heading a different direction than what we thought we would.

Prayer: Father God, we sometimes struggle to understand Your plan. Help us to be patient with our families and neighbors, and especially with those entering adulthood or stepping out in faith for the first time. Wherever we’re at, please empower us to continue growing in wisdom and favor, with You and with people. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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