



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for January 6, 2008
Released on Wednesday, January 2, 2008**

"Questions and Answers" ("Inspired to Inquire")

Lesson: Luke 2:41—52.

Read: Luke 2:41—52.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 148:7—14.

LESSON TEXT

Luke 2:41-52

41Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Identify the unusual events of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem at age 12.
2. Explain what the story of Jesus as a 12-year-old contributes to our understanding of His life and ministry.
3. Suggest one way to ensure that "being about the Father's business" is of first importance in his or her life.

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Luke is a rich storehouse of Jesus' instruction, and our next four lessons focus on several themes from His teaching. But Luke also provides insight into the process through which Jesus became aware of the great truths He would eventually teach.

It may seem odd to speak of the omniscient Son of God becoming newly aware of anything. Yet Luke also reminds us that He was fully human as well as divine; and as a human being, He underwent development similar to what all of us experience. So Luke could say that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40).

Most of the facts we wish we knew about Jesus' childhood are hidden from us. Mark and John did not even mention His childhood, and Matthew confined himself to the events surrounding His birth. Luke gave the fullest account, and that focuses chiefly on the event in this week's lesson, which pertains to Jesus' growing consciousness of His divine mission.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The events we read about in this week's lesson witness Jesus in Jerusalem. This is not the first time He has been there (see Luke 2:21-40; also see last week's lesson). It is interesting that the passages describing the two trips end with the same idea: *Jesus continued to grow*.

There are two settings for today's lesson. One is the dusty road between Nazareth and Jerusalem (a journey of about 75 miles). The other is the temple in Jerusalem itself. What happened in these two settings will cause us to ask a question that rings true for parents today: What do we make of a child who causes His parents grief when He chooses not to do what He must have known His parents wanted Him to do?

QUESTIONS

Important Trip (Luke 2:41-44a)

1. What feast did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus attend in our text?

Joseph, Mary and Jesus attended the feast of Passover in today's text. Passover was a key event in the life of a Jewish male... it still is. Passover was an eight-day festival consisting of the Passover proper and the Feast of Unleavened Bread—which followed.

So the crowds would converge on Jerusalem and swell its population to many times its usual size. Joseph and Mary annually made the eighty-mile trek from Nazareth to Jerusalem, probably as part of a large caravan from Galilee.

2. Why was Jesus' visit to the feast at age 12 especially important for Him?

Jesus' visit to the feast at age 12 was especially important for Him because all Jewish males were expected to attend three festivals—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Even if they could not attend all of them, they tried to at least go to Passover, which was the high point on their sacred calendar.

For the first twelve years of his life, a Jewish boy was represented at the festival by his father. But at age 13 he became a son of the law, or son of the covenant, and had to fulfill this duty himself. Sometimes boys accompanied their fathers for a year or two before this; so when Jesus attended at age 12, it was an important preparation for Him.

3. How did children get religious training in ancient Israel?

The boy Jesus, like other Jewish children, received religious training in the home from their fathers and mothers. Having earlier observed the godliness of Joseph and Mary, we can safely assume that they had instructed their entire family in the Scriptures. Jewish fathers had a mandate to teach their children the ways of God (see Deut. 6:6–9; 11:18–21). In addition, the Scriptures were taught regularly in the synagogues.

This is a reminder to Christian parents today; training—both secular and religious—first begins at home. The language and character of our children away from home should be fairly reflective of their parents' having confessed to being children of God. Do our children see us regularly studying our Bibles or praying at home? Can they hear our songs of praise as we go about our daily domestic routines? Are they witnesses to our godly conversations on the telephone, or to our selection of wholesome television programs and music? What is our pastime in relation to our calling? Are we just Sunday morning Christians? These are just a few "questions" to meditate on as we study this lesson; hopefully, we should produce the right "answers" as a result.

Absent Son

4. Why did Joseph and Mary not know that Jesus had remained behind in Jerusalem (v. 43)?

It could have been easy for Jesus to become separated from Joseph and Mary because their temple enclosure held 200,000 people. There is no hint of carelessness on their part; they merely entrusted to Jesus whatever freedom seemed appropriate for a young man of His age. Supposing Him to be in the caravan, they traveled an entire day, which took them about halfway home. But when the group stopped for the night, they discovered He was missing.

Perhaps the parents were not immediately worried. The group was large, and Jesus could have been among relatives or friends. But since no one had seen Him, their anxiety grew.

The word translated "child" in verse 43 is not the same as that found in Luke 2:40. The word in verse 43 could be translated "boy" or "youth" and is appropriate for one who is on the threshold of taking up adult duties. Jesus, having displayed progress toward maturity, was entrusted with a degree of independence.

Startling Discoveries (Luke 2:44b–47)

5. How long did it take Joseph and Mary to find Jesus (vs. 44, 45)?

When Joseph and Mary finally realize that Jesus is missing, they do not know for certain that He is still back in *Jerusalem*. There is no doubt that they are alarmed by

the possibility that something terrible has happened to Him. On the return journey they undoubtedly look in desperation for young Jesus all along the way. Even *their kinsfolk and acquaintance* do not know where He is. It is a frightening situation.

Arriving in Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary began a search that eventually led them to Jesus. The “three days” mentioned here most likely refers to the total time elapsed since they had left Jerusalem—one day with the caravan, a second day returning, and a third on which they found Him. The search may not have been as arduous as we think, for the feast was over and the crowds would have been gone. (See the next question for where Jesus was found when Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem.)

6. Where was Jesus found, and what was He doing (vs. 46, 47)?

The last time they had seen Jesus had been in the temple; so that is where Joseph and Mary returned. They found Him sitting among the doctors. The word translated “doctors” means teachers. These were Jewish religious teachers who, according to their custom, were sitting with their students and engaging them in discussion through “questions and answers.”

Jesus sat among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. Jesus appears here not as a teacher but as a listener, a learner, a questioner, and a discussor. From the standpoint of His deity, there would seem to be no need for this. But Luke’s account emphasizes Jesus’ humanity, which was developing a consciousness of His divine mission and thirsting to understand the full import of God’s truth.

7. What did Jesus do that astonished the rabbis?

Even in His zeal to learn, Jesus revealed that He was no ordinary student, for “all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47). “Astonished” is a strong term indicating that they were beside themselves in amazement. They had never encountered anyone like Jesus.

They were amazed at His understanding. “Understanding” is a term that stresses acuteness of comprehension. The insight He displayed in this dialogue revealed a mind that avoided the trivialities for which Judaistic argument was notorious and cut to the heart of God’s revelation.

They were also amazed at Jesus’ answers! The method of discussion included not only the asking of questions by students to be answered by the teachers but also the answering of teachers’ questions by students. This is where Jesus’ insight and wisdom especially shone forth. Instead of parroting for them what He may have heard others say, Jesus revealed the sharpness of His own mind in interpreting and applying divine truth.

Unusual Dialogue (Luke 2:48–50)

8. Why did Mary rebuke Jesus? How did He answer her (v. 48)?

Just as the teachers of the law were amazed at Jesus, so also were His parents. The word for “amazed” here differs from “astonished” in the preceding verse, but it is equally vivid. It implies being stricken out of one’s senses. They were shocked not so much by the things Jesus was saying as by the fact that He was saying them there.

For Mary, shock soon gave way to a more motherly reaction. She could not resist rebuking Jesus for dealing with Joseph and her this way. She had no reference point to understand His independent behavior. He had always been an obedient child. So she was perplexed. How could he have done this?

Mary's complaint was personal: "Behold, they father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke 2:48). "Sorrowing" is a strong term that implies mental anguish. She and Joseph had suffered great anxiety over Jesus' disappearance. It is noteworthy that she referred to Joseph as His father. Note that Jesus also always respected and acknowledged Joseph as His earthly father. Again, obedience to God's divine objective is seen in the obedient lives of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

9. Why did Joseph and Mary not understand Jesus' answer (vs. 49-51)?

The young Jesus is convinced that He belongs in the temple. His answer reveals no concern about the mental state of His parents. His question *How is it that ye sought me?* expresses surprise that they would wonder where He is. And when He asks *wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* He expresses how natural it seems to Him that this is where He belongs. It was not yet obvious to them.

The reference to being *about my Father's business* is vague in the original Greek. The use of *business* (meaning, "concerns") in the *King James Version* is a good choice. Even despite that bit of vagueness, one thing is crystal clear: Jesus has become aware of a personal relationship with God, and it draws Him to the temple.

Even though the young Jesus is surprised by His parents' surprise, He remains obedient to them. Jesus realizes that obedience to His heavenly Father means obedience to the parents that His heavenly Father has chosen for Him. Jesus never sins, thus he does not violate Exodus 20:12: "Honor thy father and thy mother." So He returns with His parents. When we read that Mary *kept all these sayings in her heart*, we see her "filing things away" for future reference (compare Genesis 37:11; Luke 2:19).

Growth and Favor (v. 52)

10. In what ways did growth relate to Jesus' divine and human natures (v. 52)?

This statement reminds us of Luke's comment in 2:40: "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him" (compare 1 Samuel 2:26; Proverbs 3:4). About eighteen more years would pass before Jesus would begin His public ministry (see Luke 3:23).

The account we have just read reveals that the young *Jesus* is coming to grips with how He should live up to His responsibilities both to God and to His parents. Jesus understands that choosing to reject the will of His parents while still under their guardianship is not the behavior of an obedient child. Part of increasing *in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man* thus involves obedience to His earthly parents.

CONCLUSION

LISTENING TO GOD

Jesus had a unique calling. Even so, we can learn some things from His example as we make choices. First, Jesus understood that God would not call Him to go against divine principles in order to fulfill God's will for His life. Thus Jesus realized that God's will for Him could not involve going against the wishes of Joseph and Mary. Parents

have been known to demand that their children do things contrary to God's will, but that was not the case here. So Jesus submitted to His parents' authority. Likewise, we should understand that our choices must not conflict with things we know to be true of God's expressed desires as we daily decide how to live.

Second, we see from Jesus' example that sometimes God says, "Wait—the time isn't quite right." It's easy to get excited about a dramatic plan, claiming that it's God's will to "sell all" (Luke 18:22) and go to a foreign mission field. There indeed are times when we must follow God to challenging, exciting places. But often the harder thing is to stay in the current situation and continue to serve Him in an "ordinary" way. After perhaps imagining a life lived in or near the temple, discussing spiritual truths each day, it may have been disappointing for young Jesus to go back to Nazareth and help Joseph carry timber. But that was what God desired at that point in time.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God will bless us when we are faithful (Luke 2:41–43).
2. Making our own assumptions, especially where Jesus is concerned, can lead to some abrupt surprises (vss. 44–45).
3. A zeal to learn God's Word is often surprising (vss. 46–47).
4. Learning God's Word is a high priority (vss. 48–49).
5. We may not understand God's work and ways, but we can remember and ponder them in our hearts (vss. 50–51).
6. Growing in wisdom is never easy or quick (vs. 52).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Make sure to listen to God's desires above your own.

PRAYER

Our Father: Whether You call us to new grand plans or to continue where we are, help us to be faithful and to submit our desires to Yours, as Jesus did. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

We all know that the Golden Rule states that we should treat others as we would like them to treat us. Some of us may not realize that this is based on Luke 6:31, which is part of next week's lesson text. You should give some serious thought this coming week to what this involves—particularly when it comes to dealing with our enemies. Do you really believe that love is the strongest force in the universe? Read Luke 6:27–36 in preparation for January 13, 2008's lesson, "Responding to Opposition: Inspired to Love." The Golden Text is Luke 6:35, "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest." *Good studying!*

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