

As the one and only Son of God, Jesus experienced human life fully and yet without sin.

Throughout the four Gospels, we only get this small window of Jesus' childhood between the ages of two and thirty in Luke's account. It's so unique that it's been studied at length and commented upon by many Bible scholars. Without contextual consideration, the casual reader may be tempted to think that on this occasion, Jesus was (at least close to) being disrespectful of His parents. Today's lesson will explore this snippet of time and what it tells us about the One who never ceases to amaze us—nor should we suppose He will ever cease to amaze us...even throughout eternity!

The shock of missing a child for even a relatively short period of time has been experienced by many parents. My wife and I experienced this first hand. We noticed one afternoon that our youngest daughter was missing, so we called for her and looked everywhere in the house we thought she could be. Amy was only three years old at the time. We felt like we were in a state of disbelief, even panic. Our son and his friend took off on their bicycles and searched throughout the neighborhood for her. We kept looking in every room, every closet, and under every bed. After about an hour and a half of looking, I happened to glance at the side of the sofa in the living room and saw her behind it, sound asleep. What a relief we felt!

Imagine how anxious, even frantic Mary and Joseph must have felt when they realized that their twelve year old boy was missing from their company. Time must have seemed frozen. Nothing else really mattered...they had to find Jesus!

Luke 2:41— *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.* As specified by the Law of Moses, It was customary for all Jewish males to appear before the Lord at the temple three times per year for Festivals commanded by God in the *Law of Moses* (Torah). In Jesus' day, Jewish males who were thirteen years of age and above and lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem were required to go to the Temple and participate in the Passover annually. Because Jesus and His family lived in Nazareth about seventy miles from Jerusalem, they didn't *have to* make the trip annually. They *chose* to do so, signaling to us their deep piety.



Verses 42-43— ⁴²*And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.* ⁴³*And 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.* At age twelve, it is noted by Bible scholars that according to ancient rabbinical writings, a Jewish boy's religious instruction intensified as he approached the age of thirteen. At that age, a Jewish male was expected to take on the religious responsibilities of an adult, thus becoming a *son of the Commandment*. The text only says here that the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, and that His parents didn't yet know He was missing.

Verses 44-45— ⁴⁴*But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.* ⁴⁵*And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.* We're not sure how many people were in their company, but they had travelled approximately twenty miles toward Nazareth before realizing Jesus was missing. They looked among their relatives and friends, but He just couldn't be found. The only hope they had was to return to Jerusalem. Bible commentator *Richard Neill Donovan* says, "Any parent can imagine the range of feelings experienced by Joseph and Mary. They must be both frightened and angry—alternating between 'Please, dear God!' and 'Wait till I get my hands on him!' The slow journey back to Jerusalem and the search in the city must be sheer torture."

Verses 46-47 — ⁴⁶ *And 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.* ⁴⁷ *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.* At the age of twelve, an ordinary Jewish boy upon finding himself separated



from his family could have thought upon mischief and made some very bad choices. He may have thought this was a new freedom he could explore for awhile...until reality set in. On the other hand, a boy other than Jesus may have panicked and perhaps run to the wrong place for help after realizing he was left behind. But Jesus was no ordinary child. Jesus was drawn and attentive to the rabbinical teaching and discussion that

took place at a commonly known location in the temple complex. The doctors of the Law described here were teachers as well, and saw something very unique about the Child Jesus. He asked questions, which is a sign of a good student. What may have caught their attention even more was His extraordinary understanding of the things pertaining to God, and that He gave remarkably perceptive and insightful answers for a boy His age. Here is another excerpt from *Richard Niell Donovan* — “*Sitting is a teaching posture, but we must be careful not to over-interpret; students can also sit (Culpepper, 77). Jesus is not teaching teachers, but is listening and asking questions. Teachers rejoice in finding a student who asks good questions. Such questions indicate an active mind and invigorate a classroom. Questions and answers are a staple of Jewish teaching, and these teachers have heard many of both. They are amazed to hear such good questions and answers from a twelve-year-old boy.*”

Verses 48-49 — ⁴⁸ *And 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.* ⁴⁹ *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* With great astonishment, Mary and Joseph saw Jesus sitting and discoursing among doctors of the Law. It is believed by some commentators that after first drawing Jesus away from the place they found Him (so as to not make a scene), Mary chided Him. According to our quarterly, the Hebrew word Mary used for *Son* can also be translated as *Child*. Mary was very likely tossed between utter elation that her son was safe and well, and the lingering effects of three days of unimaginable anxiety. She managed to breathe out a reprimand, and was sure to include language of their aching search.

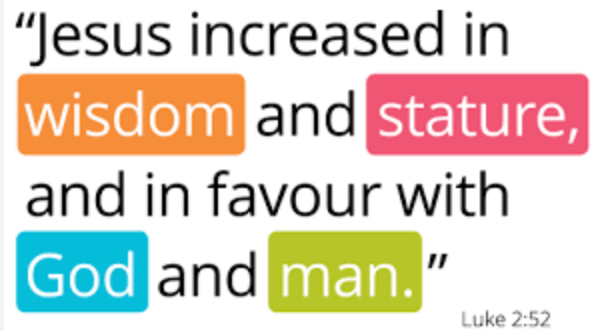
We should take notice that in **vs 49**, we find the *first recorded words* of Jesus. The Holy Child's defense was spoken in the form of two questions, thus answering the implied reproach of His mother. The *Cambridge Bible Commentary* says of these first recorded words of Jesus, “*They bear with them the stamp of authenticity in their half-vexed astonishment, and perfect mixture of dignity and humility. It is remarkable too, that He does not accept the phrase ‘Thy father’ which Mary had employed. ‘Did ye not know?’ recalls their fading memory of Who He was; and the ‘I must’ lays down the law of devotion to His Father by which He was to walk even to the Cross. Psalm 40:7-9. ‘My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work,’ John 4:34. For His last recorded words, see Acts 1:7-8.*”

Verses 50-52 — ⁵⁰ *And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.* ⁵¹ *And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.* ⁵² *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.* It is true that, despite the angelic revelations Mary and Joseph received before and after Jesus' birth, along with the prophetic pronouncements of Simeon and Anna, they still weren't able at this time to understand the words of Jesus. It's much like



us today—we don't always understand what our Lord does, doesn't do, or allows in our lives at the present time, but He may give us the reasons later. *"We see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12)"* That is why God puts such a premium on faith in the life of the believer. We must trust Him in all circumstances. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight...(2 Cor. 5:7)"*.

The boy Jesus, with resolute purpose to fulfill all righteousness, was subject to His parents. They returned to Nazareth. Also said in **vs 51** is that Mary kept (KJV), treasured (NIV), stored (NLT) all these sayings in her heart. Speaking of the time that ensued (**vs 52**), *Ellicott's Commentary* says, *"Here again we have nothing but a normal orderly development. With Him, as with others, wisdom widened with the years, and came into His human soul through the same channels and by the same processes as into the souls of others— instruction, e.g., in the school of Nazareth, and attendance at its synagogue—the difference being that He, in every stage, attained the perfection of moral and spiritual wisdom which belongs to that stage; there being in Him no sin or selfishness or pride, such as checks the growth of wisdom in all others."* Jesus, at every stage of life has shown us the most excellent example to follow. What was key to His growth and maturity, and yes, even favor with man, was His desire to do the will of His Father in heaven.



"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."
Luke 2:52

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin (Phil. 2:5-11).

Here are some questions to consider after reading today's lesson:

- ◆ Why is it important to emphasize Jesus' being fully divine and fully human? Why are both important to understand who Jesus is?
- ◆ How did Jesus' obedience to both His Father and His earthly parents highlight His divinity and humanity?

There is no blessing so great as that which we receive in sweet fellowship with our heavenly Father, daily endeavoring to put Him first and do His will, following the example of His Son.