

# Luke

*Home, But Not Exactly Alone*  
*Luke 2:41-51*

*With Study Questions*

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His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. <sup>43</sup> When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; <sup>44</sup> but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. <sup>45</sup> So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. <sup>46</sup> Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. <sup>48</sup> So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." <sup>49</sup> And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" <sup>50</sup> But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. <sup>51</sup> Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart (Luke 2:41-51).

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## Every Year, The Passover

In our last meeting we touched upon how Mary and Joseph were faithful in their religious duties. This was true even in light of the deplorable moral and theological condition of the church at the time. And though it is true that a church can descend to become a synagogue of Satan (at which point they are no longer a church), the weaknesses and imperfections found in churches should not cause us to abandon them. It

is, after all, **“the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).**

I don't live under the delusion that my children are perfect people. If you search deeply enough, you will find faults. But they are mine. And I will love them, fight for them, defend them and continue to seek to instruct them. How much more the love of God for the body of Christ.

**If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11)!**

There is little doubt in my mind that we live in an era that undervalues the significance of the church. I am not suggesting it has no faults, nor am I suggesting that we are saved by the church. But the church is the means by which the Gospel is proclaimed and the kingdom advances. Westminster Confession 25, 2 puts it this way,

**The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.**

Paul puts it thusly,

**And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22, 23).**

Years ago, a movie came out titled *Stargate*. It was about a gate found in an ancient structure (I think a pyramid) that opened to a foreign world. There were all sorts of things the pyramid contained in order to guard and protect the gate. The pyramid was not the gate. But it was the means by which the gate preserved, protected and presented. Jesus said,

**I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved (John 10:9 - NIV).**

There were three annual festivals in Jerusalem which Jewish men were required to keep (Exodus 23:14-17). Though females were not entirely excluded. This would not have been an easy journey for Mary and Joseph (about 70 miles). Yet they were faithful.

The New Covenant has no such festivals. We have church engaged in worship where all the things the festivals pointed to are summed up in Christ, His word, His sacraments. It is the worship service where we see God enthroned in the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). It is not something we should not miss easily.

**When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it* <sup>44</sup> but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances <sup>45</sup> So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him (Luke 2:43-45).**

### **An Emotional Event**

Now we enter the current story. Jesus is twelve years old. The family is heading home (probably after about a week). But Jesus "**lingered behind.**" Linger may not be a good translation, since it carries the idea of hanging out longer than you should, which we shall see is not the case.

We should not view this as some irresponsible act on the part of Mary and Joseph. It was apparently very common for families and friends to travel together and watch each other's children. Plus, Jesus was now twelve which, in that culture was the brink of manhood.

At the same time, let us not lose the anxiety of the event. I recall my own children walking around the block when they were very young and not getting home as quickly as we thought they should. I got in my car and broke speed limits and interrupted strangers in their conversations. My wife was in tears. We eventually found them, and all was well. But what Luke is presenting here is a religious situation embroiled in emotion. With hearts full of anxiety, they head back of Jerusalem.

Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.<sup>47</sup> And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:46, 47).

## Q & A

It would be three days before they would find Him. We are not given the details of the process, but somehow, they figured to search for Him in the temple. Though not prohibited, it was not likely the norm for a child His age to be in this setting. I must say, if I were given the opportunity to be an eyewitness to the actions of Christ, I would place this above the walking on water or the feeding of the 5000.

To witness as twelve-year-old Jesus interacting in the middle of the teachers, would have truly been “astonishing” to behold. History tells us that “Rabbinic teaching made considerable use of questions on the part of the pupils, out of which discussion could arise.”<sup>1</sup> The language used here, according to Marshall, “implies not just curiosity, but rather probing questions designed to elicit decisions.”<sup>2</sup>

Sadly (yet obviously appropriately) we are not given the details of the discussions. But I can think of few things more encouraging as a teacher than questions from those under my pastoral care. It tells me they are engaged. They are engaged as active listeners in the lesson/sermon, or they are engaged in life, where others have been challenging their Christianity.

I recall having R. C. Sproul as an instructor in one of my seminary classes. I simply couldn't get enough. Even during the breaks, I would pepper him with questions. I finally concluded that I may have become a nuisance, but this is the kind of nuisance we want in the church.

Every Sunday after the sermon our church is given the opportunity to engage in this type of question-and-answer activity. Years ago I realized that much of my sermon was left on the cutting room floor, due to time constraints. I wanted to give people the opportunity to ask things I may have left out of the sermon, or clarify things not communicated well. It also

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 127). Exeter: Paternoster Press.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 127). Exeter: Paternoster Press.

helps me understand my students. What they know and don't know. It may be one of my favorite activities. It's highly valuable and I think every pastor should do it and every member of the church take advantage of it.

For Jesus, this was part of what He pursued in order to increase in wisdom and favor with God and men. If it was good for Him, it should be good for us.

**So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." 49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:48, 49)?**

### **A Human, Yet Divine, Encounter**

How very human this encounter!! The room was, little doubt, an intimidating setting, full of Israel's teachers. We are not told precisely how Mary engaged Jesus (if she took Him to another room a bit later??). In my own reckoning (which is far short of inspired) I imagine she addresses Him immediately with a hushed, but intense tone! He may have been the Savior of the world, but He was also her little boy and He had put her through quite an ordeal! This may have just been a little taste of Simeon's prophecy, that **"a sword will pierce through your own soul" (Luke 2:35).**

Mary's chastisement is met with the first recorded words of Jesus. These were difficult words. They were words not readily understood by His earthly parents. **"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"** Contained in this answer is not a disrespect for His parents, but a foretaste of many things. It was a clear prioritizing of His Father in heaven, even above all earthly authorities.

It is critical for us to know who has authority in our lives, what they have authority over and to what extent the ultimate authority, who is God Himself, overrules even legitimate human authorities. I recall as a teen, coming to faith in Christ, telling my parents (without a sense, or in the midst, of rebellion, but elucidation) that I had come to know an authority over them.

In a very preliminary sense, Jesus was preparing His own parents to endure His task. These first words of Christ are indeed loaded words. At

first glance, to us, they may seem benign. But Jesus would later push these words to the point of offense that would cost Him His life.

**Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:18).**

**But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.  
51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart (Luke 2:50, 51).**

The unique Father/Son relationship between God the Father and God the Son, was not understood by Mary and Joseph, at least not fully. They were not entirely unacquainted with Jesus being the fulfillment of God's great promises throughout the Old Testament. How could Mary have expressed the words of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) if she had no idea what was going on??

We are not told here that Jesus noticed their confusion and clarified the matters. We were told earlier that Mary "pondered" all these things (Luke 2:10), that is, seek to organize them in her own mind. Here we are told that Mary "**kept all these things in her heart.**" Some versions say "treasured." The idea is to preserve, treasure or maintain.

When we hide the word of God in our hearts, even if we currently fail to grasp the fulness thereof, a field is seeded when God can eventually bring growth according to His timing and according to our capacity, *ad modum recipientis* – in proportion to our capacity. We should recognize such a necessary principle in ourselves and others. The question above our current knowledge and wisdom is the direction of our knowledge and wisdom.

As mentioned previously, our next encounter with Jesus it will be as One ready to be consecrated to his task."<sup>3</sup> What Luke finishes with here is the subjection of Jesus to His parents. His fulfillment of all righteousness (Matthew 3:15) included His obedience to His parents. Though strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the Son of God, He still submitted to His parents. Biblically speaking, do you know who are the authority figures in

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<sup>3</sup> Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Gospel of Luke: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 130). Exeter: Paternoster Press.

your life, and in what categories you are to submit? This is part of godliness.

Of course, as this event hints, Jesus would ultimately submit to will of His Father in heaven.

**For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (John 6:38).**

And what is that will?

**This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:39, 40).**

May we all be in that number!



## Questions for Study

1. Discuss the faithfulness of Joseph and Mary and the religious festivals. What does that mean to us today (pages 2-4)?
2. Why do you suppose Luke (the Holy Spirit) brings such an event like this (a missing child) to our attention?
3. How did Jesus learn according to this passage? Is this a good method? How can we implement this today (pages 5, 6)?
4. Was the answer Jesus gave His mother disrespectful? What are things contained in His answer (pages 6, 7)?
5. What does it mean that Mary “kept all these things in heart” (page 7)?
6. Was Jesus a submissive Son? In what ways (pages 7, 8)?