The Amazing Child Who Was God, Part 1
Luke 2:39-46
42-32

I want you to open your Bible this morning to the second chapter of Luke's gospel, Luke chapter 2. We come to a monumental passage in Luke's gospel that I would like to title, "The Child Who Was God," “The Child Who Was God." Luke chapter 2 and we'll begin looking at verse 39.

It always amuses me when I see bumper stickers on the back of cars that say, "My child is an honor student at Blank School." And I see more and more of those all the time. And we can be pretty...pretty proud of our children and the fact that they're honor students or the fact that they're good little baseball players or they're good at memorizing something or they win their Timothy award in AWANA or whatever it is. But we may somewhat over estimate their capabilities, at least when compared with true child geniuses. Such as, for example, Jean Louis Cardiac, from the eighteenth century; born in France, he was known as the wonder child. Jean could recite the alphabet when he was three months old. At the age of four he not only read Latin but translated it into English and French. He read Greek and Hebrew and was proficient in such subjects as arithmetic, history, geography and genealogies by six. He died in Paris when he was seven.

And then there was Christian Friedrich Heineken. He was known throughout Europe as The Infant of Lubeck, after his birthplace in Germany. In addition to an astounding faculty for numbers, little Christian reportedly knew all the principle events related in the Bible by the time he was one. At three he was conversant with world history, geography, Latin and French. The king of Denmark sent for him in 1724 to confirm these stories of the child's extraordinary abilities. Shortly after his stay in Copenhagen, little Christian became ill and died at age four.

And then there was the very famous Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, maybe the most prodigious of all child prodigies. Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria. At four he began music lessons with his violinist father. At five he composed minuets. At six he was a virtuoso on the violin and harpsichord and toured with his older sister, creating a sensation in European courts with this phenomenal ability to sight-read music and improvise at six. He wrote his first symphony at eight and at eleven, forced to compose in solitary confinement for the suspicious archbishop of Salzburg, he passed the test and was offered the salary job of city concert master at eleven. At twelve he wrote two operas and a mass. His reputation grew over the years. His operas, concertos and symphonies of the highest order came from his pen. Today he is still regarded as one of the world's supreme geniuses.

And then there was in the nineteenth century the famous John Stewart Mill. He was often called a manufactured genius. He was the product of an educational experiment that reads like a record of medieval torture. His irritable father was a historian and philosopher named James Mill. He forced his son to learn Greek at three, history at four, Latin, geometry and algebra by eight. By twelve he had read Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Terrance, Cicero, Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides and Demosthenes, all in Greek. His father required him to write English verse and educate his

younger siblings. John Stewart Mill eventually became a world renowned philosopher.

And then there was also living on into the beginning of the twentieth century, Truman Henry Safford, son of a Vermont farmer. Showed his precocity at age three when his parents amused themselves with his calculating powers. At seven he studied algebra and geometry. At nine he constructed and published an almanac. At ten he originated a new rule for obtaining moon risings and settings in one quarter of the time of previous methods. At aged ten he was asked to square the number, that is to multiply it by itself, the number 365,365,365,365,365,365 multiplied by itself. He gave the correct answer in less than a minute. And I'm not going to read you the forty numbers that make up the answer. Obviously he was smart. He graduated from Harvard at the age of eighteen.

And further on into the twentieth... By the way, are you thinking of removing the bumper sticker? Further into the twentieth century there is William James Sidis, son of a Harvard psychology professor who used to use his child to prove that children could master very complex subjects at a young age. At six months he knew his ABCs. At two years he read adult books. He was into advanced mathematics at three, mastered French by four. At eight he graduated from high school. After independent study in Greek, Latin, German, Russian, French, Turkish and Armenian, he entered Harvard at eleven where he lectured the Harvard mathematical society on fourth-dimensional bodies.

And then there was, still alive, Joel Kupperman, born in 1936. He was the most famous of the famous quiz kids, radio quiz kids of the 1940s. At five he sent the show an application letter in which he mentioned his ability to do ninety-eight or ninety-nine times any number in his head immediately. Asked during an audition to multiply twenty-four by ninety-eight, he answered that would be 2,352. When asked how he got the number so fast, he replied in his soon to be famous lisp, "Dat is a thequet twick." The twick, which involved working to the nearest zero, he had discovered himself. His IQ was in excess of 200, it was not measurable. At five he had the highest general mental development of any child tested ever by the Chicago public schools and eventually he received his Ph.D. at Cambridge. He's now on the faculty at the University of Connecticut and publishes scholarly books and articles.

Michael Gross born in '54 was the son of a credit union manager in Lansing, Michigan. He astounded his mother by reading aloud to her without any previous instruction. His IQ is so high it can't be measured. He was obviously under-challenged at school. At four on his first day in kindergarten he saw a class mate coloring an apple blue. He remarked with interest, "That's the kind of approach Picasso would use." At ten he moved directly from fifth grade to Michigan State University. He became the youngest college freshman in nearly a century, graduated with a Ph.D. finally from Yale before he was twenty.

And then many believe the most brilliant child prodigy alive today is Kim Ung-yong, born in 1963 in Korea, amazing person. He was talking at five months, writing at seven months. His IQ is estimated higher than any. When he was four years old he was fluent in Korean, English, Japanese and German and he was solving intricate calculus problems on Japanese television before his fifth birthday.

And then there was Joe Hall born in 1966 in tiny Plum Tree, North Carolina, son of a high school band director, surprised his mother by copying the alphabet when he was only 14 months old. At three he read adult books on space and electronics. At five he was playing the classics on the piano

and composing. Stunned parents discovered he had leukemia, however, so he read about it and the child remarked, "I suppose my statistical chances don't look too promising." And he would know. His intellectual curiosity undimmed, the boy struggled determinedly against his disease. At six he became a pianist with the high school bands. He won a countrywide contest with his compositions. Bored with school, his IQ off the charts, exhausting the resources of the local library, he read in three weeks 400 pounds of technical material donated by the Army. At ten he corresponded with rocket scientist Werner Von Braun and set up his own center for UFO investigation.

Amazing children, amazing children. But all of these children fade into foolishness compared with one twelve-year-old boy named Jesus, the child who was God. In a dramatic and moving account of the one recorded incident in the first thirty years of Jesus' life, Luke gives us a glimpse of the child who was God. No human genius, no IQ immeasurably in excess of the number 200 could even come close to the mind and the capability of the child who was God.

Luke wants us to know not just that the child was God. He's already told us that. The prophets said he was God. The priest Zacharias said He was God, this child who was to be born the light to the Gentiles, the day star who would arise from on high. The angel told Mary He would be the Savior, the Son of the Most High God who would rule over an eternal kingdom. The angel also told in a dream the father Joseph that his child would be Immanuel, God with us. Simeon, the man in the temple, gave testimony to the fact that this was God, this was the one from heaven, the Messiah. Anna confirmed that this was the one who would bring redemption to Israel. Luke has made it clear by the prophets and the angels and the testimony of Joseph and Mary, the testimony of Simeon and Anna that this child is indeed the Messiah, the Savior, the fulfiller of all of Israel's hopes and comforts and peace and salvation and glory, that in fact this child is God, virgin conceived and virgin born, Son of the Most High.

But it is important for Luke to tell us that the child knew that He was God; that the child understood who He was, that He came to a complete understanding of His nature and His mission. This is not something that came on Jesus later in His life. This isn't some metamorphosis that a human went through say at the age of thirty when some divine element came into His life. This is not some real imaginative idea that Jesus had which He tried to foist on some unsuspecting public when He launched His ministry. Not something that He personally claimed for Himself only after He was sort of thrust into the limelight by well-intentioned friends later in His life. But rather this was His true identity. He was God and He knew it. He was the child who was God and He knew He was God and He understood what that meant in terms of personhood and in terms of identity and mission. And here we have in verses 39 through 52, the end of chapter 2, the only incident ever recorded in the first thirty years of Jesus' life and the only words that Jesus is ever recorded to have said in those thirty years. And it all happens at the age of twelve.

By the time He reached twelve He knew exactly who He was and He knew exactly why He came. And that is the incident that Luke selects because of its monumental importance. And we're going to be looking at this incredible instance over the next couple of weeks. I confess to you that I tried to get further than I did in the first hour, but I have learned to sort of trust in the Lord on those kinds of things. I...I wanted to get to a culminating point, a concluding point. I never got there. So I just let you know that there's going to be a bit of a process until we come to the fullest understanding. But don't feel bad about that. Joseph and particularly Mary were going through the same process of trying to unfold all the significance of this very event recorded here.

Now we ended our last study at verse 38 with the testimony of Simeon and Anna as to the identity of the child. Immediately upon completing that testimony, we now have heard from Gabriel the angel, that this in fact is the Messiah, the Son of God. It has been given to Mary and also in Matthew's gospel recorded that he spoke to Joseph as well in a dream. We have heard the testimony of Mary herself that God has brought salvation. We have heard the testimony of Zacharias (the father of John) that a horn of salvation has been raised up in this child born to Mary. We have heard the angels in the fields announcing to the shepherds, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth," at the birth of the Savior of the world.

We have been told by Simeon that this is the one whom the prophets promised would be a light to the Gentiles as well as bring glory to Israel. And Anna's testimony that this was the one who would bring redemption to Jerusalem. All of that testimony has been given.

But we need to hear from the child Himself. Is this something that people were forcing on Him? Is this something that was being pressed on Him so that because of mounting Jewish messianic expectation He sort of pushed Himself into this place when He reached the age of thirty and assumed a role? Or is this His true identity?

Well it's critical to understand that it is His true identity and that's why the remarkable incident at the age of twelve is recorded for us so it leaves absolutely no question as to the understanding of Jesus with regard to His true identity. So we transition out of the testimony of Simeon and Anna in verse 38 to verse 39 where our passage begins.

And it says, "And when they had performed everything," they being Joseph and Mary, "according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth."

Performing everything according to the law of the Lord refers back to verse 22. After a Jewish woman gave birth to a male child, she was to go forty days later to the temple to make purification sacrifice. And that's exactly what they did as verse 22 indicates when the days, the forty days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought the baby up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. They went up, they made the appropriate sacrifice. They did what they were to do. Setting apart the male child, verse 23, indicates as the Old Testament instruction had been given in Exodus and in Numbers. And then verse 24, to offer the sacrifice, in their case a pair of turtledoves, two young pigeons because they were too poor to afford a lamb. So they did that. They made the sacrifice. They presented the male child to the Lord. They uniquely presented this child, this virgin-conceived child to God.

And then verse 39 says, "After doing all of that, they went back to Galilee to their own city of Nazareth." However, between the completion of that and the return to Nazareth, there's a very important part of the history of the birth of Christ that’s not given by Luke. Luke jumps from completing the ceremonies in verse 39, to going to Galilee, but there's something that happened in there of tremendous importance. What is it? It is the visit of the wise men. It is the slaughter of Herod and the deliverance of Jesus from that slaughter by warning by an angel that caused them to flee to Egypt and escape that massacre. All of that occurs between the time of purification at the temple and the time they returned to Galilee.

Now it doesn't serve Luke's purpose to rerecord what Matthew has already given. So if you want that

entire remarkable story, read Matthew 2. The whole chapter, verses 1 to 23 unfolds that marvelous story.

You say, "How do you know it happened then?" Well it had to have happened then because they were living in a house. The wise men came to a house, which was different than the stable where they were at first. It also had to have happened then because when they came for purification they had to offer birds as it says in verse 24. That was done only if you had limited funds. When the wise men came they brought gold and frankincense and myrrh. Literally they brought a cache of immense wealth and gave it to Joseph and Mary, certainly providing enough money for them to have purchased a lamb for the purification if in fact the wise men had come before that ceremony was held. The fact that they bought turtledoves, the cheapest of all things next to just offering grain, indicates they had no such money which tells us the wise men hadn't yet been there.

So, Luke doesn't record that because it doesn't suit his particular purpose, but Matthew does. And all of it you'll find in Matthew 2 and it happened between the forty-day purification presentation at the temple which included the testimony of Simeon and Anna, and the time they left Bethlehem to go take up their residence back in their home town of Nazareth. Many months intervened that they lived there in Bethlehem, months during which the wise men came, during which Herod wanted to slaughter all of the male children so as to king...kill the new king he heard was born and during which they escaped by instruction from an angel into Egypt. So after all of that, they finally go back to Nazareth.

Now we pick the story up in verse 40 and it is here that we really begin to focus on the life of the child who was God. Verse 40 tells us, "The child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." That one verse and that one sentence covers twelve years. It covers twelve years, right up until the next two verses when they came to the Passover and verse 42 says, "Jesus had become twelve years old." So verse 40 covers birth to twelve. Twelve years He lived as an infant, as a little child, as a child, and as one who was on the verge of what the Jews considered to be adulthood at the age of twelve. So the twelve years are covered by verse 40.

Then verses 41 down into verse 51 cover an incident that happened when He was twelve. Then verse 51 and 52 cover from twelve to the beginning of His ministry at age 30. So verse forty covers twelve years. And then you have an incident at the age of twelve that goes down into verse 51, and then verses 51 and 52 cover the final eighteen years until He reached thirty and began His ministry.

So you have the birth to twelve in verse 40, essentially twelve to thirty in verse 52, and an incident at age twelve in the middle. This is all we know, folks, about thirty years. This is it. This is all we know from the forty-day purification to the time when Jesus began to preach and was baptized by John. Thirty years of His life are going to pass before us, essentially in two verses, verse 40 and verse 52, with an incident in the middle at the age of twelve. It is very important to understand that if you have thirty years of history and only one incident recorded, that incident is of monumental significance. And we're going to see that before we finish our look at this portion of Scripture.

But let's begin by looking at the silent years of childhood, from birth to twelve as recorded in verse 40. This one verse covers twelve years and all it says is, "The child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." That covers twelve years. And basically it's a very, very sort of...sort of simple statement that He developed as children develop. This is something that's important for us to affirm, that Jesus was fully man. He was man from the

very beginning. There have been all kinds of strange heresies that have Jesus as a phantom spirit or a ghost or something less than human. This is to indicate to us His real and true genuine humanity. As all children grow, so this child continued to grow in the very normal physical pattern of growth. He grew from His infancy to being on the brink of adulthood at the age of twelve.

His growth is uniquely defined as becoming strong, becoming strong. Obviously there's a physical component in that and as Jesus grew and was sinless, never sinning, without the stain of sin on His life, without the effects of sin in His life, without the declining entropic effects of fallenness in His life, He grew as no other child ever grew. I mean, He grew as a child grows but in a manner that's unique, in a manner unaffected by sin. His growth was never hindered, never impaired, and never restricted, or never affected by sin. So He developed certainly a kind of physical strength, a kind of physical manliness, a kind of look that would be unique. He could certainly do the labor of a carpenter which Mark 6:3 indicates is what He did in His father's business. He could certainly walk miles. And, of course, if you live in Nazareth, you can go there today, you never walk anywhere on a flat level. You're either going up or down because it's on the side of hills. And all of Galilee is rolling hills. He could walk for miles...the strength to do that, and the strength to endure sleeplessness as He did often in His ministry, praying all night. The strength even eventually to be tortured, the strength to be crucified and still alive so that His life wasn't even taken from Him by the act of crucifixion, rather He gave it up by Himself. He had some...some unique physical capacities.

Now many men could do the walking and do the carpentry work and do the physical things and maybe endure torture to some degree, but certainly Jesus would exceed them all. This child who was God would have a physical strength and a physical prowess that would be beyond any other human ever who lived.

But His growth was not only physical, it was spiritual and when it says there in verse 40, "And become strong," the word "strong" really is best linked with the following participial phrase "increasing in wisdom," so that that participle describes the strength as the strength of being, literally in the Greek, full of wisdom. I'm sure He had the capacity to know French and Korean and Japanese and German and Italian and Latin and whatever else. I'm sure He had the capacity to square any number imaginable. I'm sure He had the capacity to create symphonies and concertos and music that would know no bounds and no end because in this child is the mind of God dwelling in the mind of a man. His mind, His capacity to know, is only described here in the Greek literally "being filled with wisdom." And that would be the profound wisdom of the mind of God. We are said as believers in 2 Corinthians to be growing up into the mind of Christ, as the ultimate. And the mind of Christ, because He's God, is the mind of God. Here was the child who could think like God thinks. There wouldn't be any IQ test that could measure the mind of the child who was God. He was filled with wisdom.

There's real humanity here and yet contained in this humanity is the mind of God, the wisdom of God which came upon Him gradually. He didn't understand that when He was an infant. He didn't understand that when He was a toddler. He didn't understand that when He was a little child or a child. But by the time He reached this age of twelve, the fullness of the wisdom of God as to His identity and His mission and the truth of God had come to its fruition in His mind. At twelve He thought like God thinks, full of wisdom.

And it says in verse 40, "The grace of God was upon Him." Grace, not the kind of grace that comes to sinners who don't deserve it, but grace as the favor that God gives to one who does. It simply

means that God was devoted to Him, that God favored Him, similarly to the testimony of God at His baptism in Luke 3 where God says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This is all it says about His childhood.

William Hendrickson has written, "Those who deny this are in danger of acquiring the mentality that must have marked the authors of certain apocryphal writings. These picture Jesus as being omniscient and almighty and lions and leopards worshiping Him. One writer says the infant Jesus says to a palm, 'Bend down and refresh My mother with your fruit.' And it does so immediately. One writer says, 'At five years of age He modeled twelve sparrows out of soft clay, clapped His hands and they flew away,'" etc., etc.

That isn't what the Bible says at all. He grew as a child and He appeared at all points on the outside to be like any other normal, developing child. And there was development as His brain developed. It was truly human. As it developed it became capable of receiving more and more of the understanding of the wisdom of God so that finally when He was twelve He grasped it and He thought God's thoughts.

He also learned by experience. Hebrews, very interesting passage of Scripture. In Hebrews chapter 5, and it's a passage that you have to come back to again and again in talking about Christ. But in Hebrews 5:8 it says, "He learned obedience from the things He suffered."

What does that mean? I think as He was growing up He was suffering the onslaught of temptation. Chapter 4 verse 15 says, "He was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." He suffered the constant temptation that comes to a child, temptation to be grasping and selfish and self-centered and demanding. You know how children are. He suffered all those temptations that come to young boys through all those developmental stages. He suffered the constant barrage of temptation against His humanity. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. It was through those temptations over which He triumphed that He experientially learned what it was to obey God. So He had a developmental process going on by which in overcoming temptation He developed spiritual strength in the matter of obedience.

So by the time you get Him at the age of twelve, He is spiritually mature. He grasps who He is. He understands the wisdom of God and its application in the mission to which God has sent Him. He is the sinless child who was God.

Now in verse 41 we come to the incident at the point of twelve years of age, the incident at twelve. The first twelve years covered in verse 40, this incident covered, really in verses 41 down to 51. The only one recorded during thirty years of His life. And the only time He's ever recorded to have said anything. Obviously He spoke daily, but nothing He said is ever recorded in Scripture except this.

And it took place when He was on the brink of adulthood, twelve years after that presentation at the temple in the prior passage. It is the moment in which He reveals that He knows who He is and He knows why He came. He reveals it to His mother and to Joseph, His earthly father, and Luke, recording it, reveals it to the whole world. It is a powerful incident, it is a poignant incident, it is a profound testimony by Jesus to His own identity. There is nothing miraculous that happens in this story. There is nothing supernatural that happens in this story. And yet it is as profoundly divine as any miracle could be as Jesus identifies Himself as God the Son, and it comes in verse 49. He says,

"Why is it that you were looking for Me. Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" That is a monumental statement, the reality of which we will dig into in the days to come. But let's see how the narrative unfolds that leads to that great confession.

We pick the story up in verse 41, twelve years later. "And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover." Now this was...this was a very, very normal thing for Jewish people to do, to go to the Passover. Let me expand on that a little bit so you have an understanding.

If you go back to Exodus and Deuteronomy, you find there is instruction there as to the Jews maintaining their attendance and their involvement in certain feasts that God ordained for Israel. There were three main feasts held every year. There was the feast called Passover. There was the feast called Pentecost. And there was the feast of Tabernacles. Passover was a one-day feast that happened on the fifteenth of Nisan at the beginning of the Jewish calendar year. In our calendar, it's March or April. We obviously celebrate Easter in March or April because Jesus was crucified on a Passover. But the Jewish year began with Nisan. The fifteenth of Nisan was the day of Passover feast. Attached directly to the Passover was a seven-day feast called the feast of unleavened bread. So you really had an eight-day celebration called... It became known as Passover in general, though Passover was one day and seven days were unleavened bread.

Then fifty days later was the feast called Pentecost, the feast of the first fruits when they celebrated harvest. And then later on, that would come fifty days after the March or April feast of Nisan. Then later on in the fall, our fall, would come the feast of Tabernacles, which would celebrate the wanderings in the wilderness when they lived in tents and God provided manna for them. Those were the three feasts, three great festival celebrations.

According to Exodus 23:17, Exodus 34:22 and 23, and Deuteronomy 16:16, Jewish men were to attend all three feasts every year. But there was a diaspora or a dispersion of the Jews by the time of Jesus and Jews were scattered over everywhere. Even Joseph and Mary lived eighty miles north of Jerusalem in the town of Nazareth, which was sort of on the Gentile border, the border of Gentile lands. And as the Jews became scattered and as they became sort of more traditional and less truly devoted to God, typically a Jewish man might only come to one of the three feasts every year and that would be Passover. It became the major event. And they would generally come to that one. It was, as I said, a one-day feast, a one-day time of sacrifice that was succeeded by seven days of the unleavened bread feast which was reminiscent, of course, of the unleavened bread of the Passover. So it became known as Passover, major celebration. And it celebrated God as the Redeemer of His people, God as the deliverer, the Savior, the rescuer of His people. It memorialized an event that's recorded in Exodus 12.

You remember that Israel was taken into captivity into Egypt and they were held as slaves to the Egyptians for 400 years. They were real slaves in Egypt. They made bricks, as you remember. And God raised up a deliverer by the name of Moses. God said it's time to let My people out, it's time to lead Israel back and bring them to the land of Canaan which I have pledged to give to them, leading them out of bondage. Pharaoh wouldn't let them go, you remember. The appeal was made, "Let my people go, let my people go." Pharaoh wouldn't let them go so God sent a series of ten devastating, killing plagues to Egypt. The tenth plague was called the Passover. And what it was, was the angel of death was going to come and kill the firstborn of animals and the firstborn in every family in Egypt. And God said the only way to avoid death is to sacrifice a lamb and take the blood and put it on the side post and the top piece of the door. And when the death angel comes and sees the blood on the

doorposts, and the lintel, as it's called, he'll pass over and spare the firstborn. So the Jews did that. They sacrificed the animal, a lamb of special choice without blemish, without spot, that was a pet lamb that they had to keep in the house for a week and grow to love and then to kill and then to eat and then the blood to put on the door. And all of that pictured Christ, all of that pictured the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, who would die for sinners. And there was the Passover angel coming and as he came he saw the blood and passed by. So that was the Passover.

That was the last plague that launched the Egyptians' decision to let Israel go. And they all gathered, you remember, under the leadership of Moses, they came to the Red Sea, God parted the Red Sea. They went across the Red Sea and were on their way to the land of Canaan. Pharaoh and his army tried to follow and were drowned as the sea closed in on them.

So the Passover was then instituted by God as a memorial to God as the Savior of His people, the great deliverer of His people. So when they came together they made sacrifices as they had done in Egypt and they ate the lamb, as they had done in Egypt. And they remembered that the death angel had passed them by and God had spared them death, God had delivered them from death and also delivered them from bondage. So it's still even today is the greatest of all the Jewish celebrations.

It was required traditionally for men to go, even at the time of Jesus, but not so much the women. And so, typically not all the women would go to Passover. In fact, for a woman to go to Passover, according to Jewish tradition, was to demonstrate on her part a rather unusual spiritual devotion, a rather unusual interest in the things of God, a devotion to God and to His Word and to obedience. How interesting, verse 41, "His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year." And here again, Luke reminds us of the devout character of the faith of Joseph and Mary. They were true worshipers of the living God. They went every year to Passover. It wasn't something they did now and then, it wasn't something that Joseph alone did out of duty. They went together. And even as their little family, Jesus being the first-born, virgin-conceived, began to grow as Joseph and Mary had other children, both sons and daughters and it would be more difficult to go. And every year Joseph and Mary would go. And Luke again is showing us a sweet devotion of this young couple of teen-agers, starting out in their life every year going to the Passover.

Now twelve years after Jesus was born, they're in their mid-twenties and they're still going to the Passover. It's not an easy trip, 80 miles, three to four days, probably four days if children were in the entourage that went because they had to go from Nazareth and go around Samaria because of the attitude between the Jews and the Samaritans. So it's an eighty-mile trip and it takes three or four days if they can go twenty to twenty-five miles a day.

Verse 44 indicates that they went in a caravan. It's the only time that word is used in the New Testament. It means what it says, a large company of people traveling together. And most of the traditional Jewish scholars would say the children were in front because if the parents got in front they would be going too fast for the kids. So they put all the children in front, followed by the women, followed by the men, so that the men couldn't, because they tend to stride a little faster, distance themselves. And they would go in caravans for the sake of friendship and fellowship, family, neighbors, acquaintances. But also because it put them in a safer position to be able to withstand the traditional onslaught of highway robbers and marauders who would attack people traveling in small groups or alone.

Now both the dominant rabbinical schools, Shammai and Hillel, dominant at the time of Jesus, taught

that young children should go to Passover. It should be a family event as Exodus 12:26 and 27 indicated it, should be a family event for the instruction of Israel to teach your children that God is the Redeemer of Israel. So, Joseph and Mary and Jesus, and we don't know whether the other children came or whether they were at home, but Joseph and Mary and Jesus, for certain, came. Verse 42, "When He became twelve they went up," you always go up to Jerusalem, you go down the hillsides of Nazareth, down into the Jordan Valley which at its southern end goes 1,500 feet below sea level, and then climb all the way up to Jerusalem, always you go up to Jerusalem, down from Jerusalem. So they went up according to the custom of the feast.

Now Luke doesn't give us any details but we can...we can fill in some things because of what we know about Passover. When Joseph and Mary and Jesus arrive for the launch of Passover, Jerusalem would be swelled by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who had come from all over everywhere, both in the land of Palestine and outside where the Jews had been scattered. And they would be looking for families to stay with if they didn't already have families that they stayed with every year, or distant cousins or relatives. They would be trying to find a place to house themselves for their time there. They would also be trying to find a place where they could have their family together for the meal, where they could cook the lamb and what went with it and have the meal together. They would also be purchasing their sacrifices. So it would be a bustling and busy, busy time as the people were flooding into the cities from all over everywhere and colliding at all points in their efforts to find a place to stay, a place to eat and animals to sacrifice.

In fact, there were so many sacrifices, some historians tell us a quarter of a million animals would be slaughtered during Passover week. And at that time, of course, there would need to be the sale of those animals, so you can imagine the whole city bleating with sheep, a quarter of a million animals being sacrificed. And all twenty-four courses of the priests were there for Passover because of the massive amount of butchering that had to be done. And you can be sure that all the beggars were out, all out in their crummiest clothes, all finding their way into the most obvious place, assuming to play on the sensitivities of people who maybe were thinking more about God and their duty then than at other times. And the Roman soldiers would be there jostling with the crowds, trying to maintain some level of control. And the sacrifices would begin and the bleating of animals and the blood and Jesus would go with His family and He would go in for the time of the sacrifice of the lamb that was for His family. His father Joseph would take in the animal. The animal would be killed by the priest. The blood of the animal would be sloshed against the altar. And Jesus would see that and Jesus knew at this time that He was the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world. We can only imagine the vividness of His own mind as He ascertained the reality of all of this sacrifice and the fact that He alone would be the sacrifice to take away sin, and that some twenty years plus hence from that very time, He would be hanging on a cross outside Jerusalem, shedding blood as that true and saving Lamb of God. The reality of that in His mind must have been overwhelming to Him as a boy.

The lamb having been killed, the blood splattered on the altar, the priests would be singing the Hallel, Psalm 113 to 118. So the chaos of the crowd, the massacre of the animals, the indelible memory of the blood pouring off of the altar, running in a river out the backside of the temple ground down the back hill into the Kidron brook which turned that whole brook red with blood as it fell down into the Valley of Hinnom to the south. All of that would make it a vivid, vivid experience for the twelve-year-old Jesus who is now filled with the wisdom of God and sees it all from the divine perspective.

Then the family would take the lamb home after it had been slaughtered and the blood had been

drained, and take it home and cook it. They would find some home, somebody would give them a place, some relative perhaps, some friend, they would roast the lamb and it would be eaten...always eaten by candlelight because it was at candlelight that the Passover took place. It was at dark. They would sing psalms and they would pray to God and they would worship and celebrate God as their Redeemer as they ate that lamb.

Now when the meal was over a...a tradition developed. You find it in the Mishna, the codification of Jewish tradition. At the end of the meal a son asks a question of his father, typically the oldest son. In this case, most likely, Jesus would have looked at Joseph and after the meal was complete He would say this. And still to this very day, Jewish sons ask this question at Passover. The question is: Why is this night different from all others? That question then gave the father, Joseph, the opportunity to repeat the amazing story of the Passover in Egypt.

Then after the story, the whole night was filled with worship and praise as was the whole week.

Well, verse 42, that's what happened when the twelve-year-old Jesus went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. Why is it important that He's there at the age of twelve? Well I think you probably have a little idea about that and I'll just fill in a couple of blanks because we're not going to get beyond this. At thirteen Jewish boys were considered to be obligated to the law of God themselves. They passed out from under parental authority and they were accountable to the law of God themselves at thirteen. That is why after Jesus' time, not at Jesus' time, after Jesus' time, an official ceremony developed and that is known as bar mitzvah. It wasn't the ceremony of Jesus' time but later on it developed, but it developed out of the idea, bar mitzvah meaning son of the law, or son of the commandment, that at thirteen a son was responsible to the law of God. After all, Joseph was married probably at fourteen. Some Jewish historians say to us then that it was the father's duty to take his son to the Passover, particularly the two years before he reached thirteen, so that he would have a full understanding of the Passover and of God as His Redeemer from sin. Very important, because becoming a son of the law brought you into touch with your guilt and your need for redemption. And so according to the Talmud, fathers brought their sons as they approach thirteen for this kind of experience and instruction.

And so, Joseph is right on target. He's doing what the tradition said. He's doing what God placed upon his heart to do in obedience to the law of God. He's going to Passover. He's taking his twelve-year-old son to expose him to this.

Verse 43, "As they were returning after spending the full number of days," I have to stop here again. This again is Luke's wonderful way of telling us about Joseph and Mary. Let me tell you what had developed by the time of Jesus.

Very rarely did people stay the whole week. The majority of the people stayed some portion of that time. In fact, the common time to stay was two days. You went in perhaps the day before Passover to do whatever you needed to do. You were there for the Passover day. You did the sacrifice. You did the meal and you left without staying for the seven-week...the seven-day week of feast of unleavened bread. You sort of did your duty and you didn't take up the time unnecessarily. From the perspective of a...of a traditional Jew he would say, "I have to take the trip there, I have to take the trip back and I can't afford the other week to be there." And so he would do the two-day kind of duty.

Well not Joseph and Mary, again as it indicates. Sure it's a four-day trip down, it's a four-day trip back, but it's an eight-day experience. That's the way God designed it and that's the way they celebrated it. It says in verse 43, "As they were returning after spending the full number of days," and again Luke tells us what a remarkably godly young couple Joseph and Mary were. So that from the human side Jesus could not have had more devout and godly young parents to influence Him.

Well they left going back the eighty miles. And then it says in verse 43, and here's where the plot thickens, folks. "The boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem and His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances and when they didn't find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him."

Here's where the incident is established. Here we see the stage being set. Look at that phrase, "The boy Jesus, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem." By the way, in verse 40 He's called a child, but here He's called a boy. And we see Him in His developmental stage even in the usage of the words, and we'll say more about that next time.

His lingering was not disobedience. His lingering was not irresponsibility. There's no hint of that. His lingering wasn't even the fault of His parents. I mean, they had never known Him to do anything but exactly what He should have done. They had never known Him to be anywhere other than exactly where He should have been. And they've never known Him to do anything other than what was exactly what He expected that they wanted Him to do and to do it precisely and nothing else. He was responsible. He was obedient. He was sensitive. He was thoughtful. He was perfect.

But there was something going on here. There was a break. There was a breach. Jesus was moving from responsibility to an earthly parent to a responsibility to God. And that's why He says in verse 49, look, “I have to be in My Father's house," and He is sending a major message to His parents that a transition is taking place, that they're not going to have parental oversight over this child, but that God His Father is going to determine His life and what He does. You can imagine that He was swept up in all the drama of the Passover and knowing who He was, moving through that crowd as a twelve-year-old, realizing nobody knows who I am. Here is this massive crowd and they look sort of a glancing look at this little boy as He moves, this young boy moving through the crowd thinking absolutely nothing, having no clue that this is...this is God in human flesh, that this child is looking at them with the mind of God, that this child is watching the priests and the sacrifice and seeing it as God the eternal God of the universe sees and understands it. Swept up in these, engrossed in these divine realities, He is drawn into doing the things that have to do with His true identity.

And His parents doesn’t know He's gone. His parents, it says at the end of verse 43, are unaware of it. They assume that He was up there in the front with the other young men, milling around with the children. Joseph probably thought He was up near where Mary was and He was still classified as a child. Mary may have thought that He was almost an adult, maybe He's back with the men. They weren't aware that He was still in Jerusalem. Verse 44, they thought He was in the caravan somewhere and they went a whole day's journey, twenty, twenty-five miles. And then when they realized at the end of that day, because the families would then come together, find each other, eat and sleep, they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, assuming that He would be with somebody they knew. And, of course, they couldn't find Him there, verse 45 says.

There was only one option left and that was to go back to Jerusalem. They would stay the night.

They wouldn't go in the dark. Stay overnight, an anxious night it must have been, get up before dawn and start the twenty, twenty-five-mile trek back down the Jordan Valley, back ascending the hill to Jerusalem to try to find Him. And it says in verse 46, "It came about that after three days." Let me tell you what that means. One day out of town, the next day they came back, and the third day they looked. So after a total of three days, one day out, one day back, one day looking, they found Him. "They found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." And that sets the stage for the most dramatic, profound and penetrating statement from the mouth of Jesus, twelve-year-old, the child who was God, which indicates He knew exactly who He was, He knew exactly why He came and His mind was filled with the things of God.

And for that unfolding, we have to wait till next time. Sorry about that because this...this is such incredible information. Let's pray together.

Father, the time just seems to fly so rapidly by as we contemplate the greatness of divine truth and the glories of Christ. Oh Father, we're again reminded of the devotion of Joseph and Mary, how...how they loved You and how they obeyed Your Word and we're reminded of their faithfulness to do everything Your Word ever instructed them to do and do it to the fullest. And we're reminded as well in this wonderful story of the child Jesus who...who understood at the age of twelve the breaking dawn of all the fullness of the truth of God on His mind, that which had emerged as the years went by of His childhood. Now He was full of wisdom and He could see the Passover and He could see the sacrifice and He could see Himself in it and realize what was coming some twenty years later. Father, we...we're in awe of this incredible scene and of the child who was God, who had to be in His Father's house, doing what pertained to Your will, not to His parents, though He loved them and was a faithful son. Father, we thank You for the wonder of Christ, who exceeds any and every genius, whose mind could never be measured, whose intelligence could never be fathomed because He is the child who was God. We thank You that this one who was God became a man that He might be the Lamb who died for sinners. He knew it and we know it. We praise You for it, in His great name. Amen.

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