

# JESUS AS A YOUNG BOY IN THE TEMPLE: JESUS' FIRST RECOGNITION OF MESSIAHSHIP LUKE 02:41–52

## *Introduction*

This is an extremely important and interesting passage. It is the only passage that covers Jesus' childhood. It is important, for it gives us the first known time that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. The lessons found within the passage are inexhaustible.

- I. His faithfulness in worship was noteworthy (vv. 41-42).
- II. His social development was normal (vv. 43-45).
- III. His knowledge was surprising (vv. 46-47).
- IV. His mission was misunderstood by His parents (v. 48).
- V. His first known recognition of Messiahship was at an early age (vv. 49-50).
- VI. His obedience to His parents was striking (v. 51).
- VII. His growth was in favour with both God and man (v. 52).

## ***I. Luke 02:41–42 Jesus' Faithfulness in Worship***

Jesus' faithfulness in worship as a young boy was noteworthy. Note several things.

1. Jesus' parents were faithful in their worship. This fact is specifically stated. It was their custom to keep the Feast of the Passover every year. All male Jews who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem were required by law to attend the temple three times a year: at the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exo. 23:14-17). Women were exempt from the law, but they could attend if they wished. Note what Mary chose to do: every year His "parents went to Jerusalem." They were both faithful in their worship by choice, not by restraint.
2. Jesus' parents led and taught Him to be faithful in worship. It is not specifically said that Jesus went to Jerusalem with His parents every year, but the implication is that He did. Note the words, "Every year his parents went...for the... Passover." It was the custom for "all who were able to understand" to be present if at all possible (Neh. 8:2).

Also note His knowledge and ability to discuss issues with religious authorities (v. 46-47). This indicates that His parents continually taught Jesus, seeing to it that He was in the synagogue worshipping and learning at every opportunity. God had placed the child Jesus into their hands as a bundle of trust. The child belonged to God. He had only entrusted the child's keeping into their hands to see that He was looked after and taught. It was their responsibility to see that He grew physically, mentally and spiritually and to see that He became all He could become. The parents were faithful to their duty.

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**Thought 1.** What an example for all parents. Children are but a bundle of trust placed into our hands by God. They belong to God, not us. Therefore, we are to train up a child in the way he should go (Prov. 22:6).

3. This was a very special year for Jesus. He had just turned twelve years old. When a Jewish boy reached thirteen years of age, he became a son of the law which meant that he was now considered a man and was expected to keep all the law. It was suggested that a boy be brought to the Passover Feast a year or two early so that he might become familiar with the Temple and the Feasts. When the eleven and twelve year old initiates arrived, they were naturally given a great deal of attention and special instruction (vv. 46-47).

**Thought 1.** Note two critical points.

- 1) Every child should be taught from the very first about God and worship, about the world and a person's responsibility in it.
- 2) Every child, when he comes of age, should be charged with becoming a "son of the law," a man before God, being responsible and making his contribution to the world — all in the name of the Lord.

*Deu 6:7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

*Prov 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

*Psa 34:11 Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*

## II. *Luke 02:43–45 Social Development of Boy Jesus*

Jesus' social development was normal. This is gleaned from what happened in these verses. The parents had finished their worship obligations and were returning home to Nazareth. Jesus had remained behind, but they did not know it. They thought He was off playing and socializing with some of the other families and children in the caravan. The caravans were large and the roads were packed with thousands of pilgrims leaving the Feast. We can glean from this that Jesus was sociable and fit right in with people. The very fact that His parents would think He was off socializing with others points to a normal social development. Note: they were so sure that He was socializing that they did not bother to look for Him until nightfall (v. 44). When they did not find Him among their relatives and friends, they returned to Jerusalem to search for Him.

**Thought 1.** A child's social development is important. A child is to be helped and encouraged, led and directed to play with others. However, he must also be taught how to play and how to associate with others. He must be taught to be...

- patient
- helpful
- giving
- peaceful
- joyful
- loyal
- loving
- caring
- kind
- disciplined

...not bragging, revengeful, arrogant, jealous, selfish or easily provoked.

### III. *Luke 02:46–47 The Knowledge of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' knowledge was surprising. It took His parents three days to find Him. When they found Him, He was in the temple, in the very precinct or room where classes and discussion took place among the doctors of theology and religion.

It was a prominent place, and it was a custom to hold open classes and discussions so that the public could listen and learn. The stress of Luke at this point is the surprising knowledge of Jesus. His knowledge and understanding were phenomenal.

1. Jesus was found “sitting among the teachers.” There were some very prominent Doctors of Religion in that day, men who were very capable theologically. There was...
  - Gamaliel, the great teacher of Paul or Saul of Tarsus.
  - Hillel, one of the most revered liberal teachers with a large school of followers (See Marriage and Divorce, Shammai and Hillel, Mt. 19:1-12).
  - Shammai, one of the most revered conservative teachers who also had a school of followers (See Marriage and Divorce, Shammai and Hillel, Mt. 19:1-12).
  - Jonathan, who paraphrased the sacred books.
  - Simeon, who was to later succeed Hillel.
  - Nicodemus, who was so revered by his peers that he was sent to interview Jesus alone.

Some of these scholars were probably engaged in the discussion with Jesus, for news of the young boy and his phenomenal understanding must have swept through the halls of the temple, arousing the curiosity of the teachers or Doctors. Remember, Jesus had been in the temple for at least three days. The point to note is how Jesus was making use of the opportunity He had. He was in Jerusalem exposed to these eminent scholars for only a few days, so He grasped the opportunity to learn and perhaps teach all He could.

2. Jesus was found thirsting for knowledge and understanding. Note exactly what is said.
  - a. He was listening to them (akouonta) to what the teachers said. He listened closely, attentively, with rapt attention. He was “quick to listen” (Jas. 1:19).
  - b. He was asking them questions (eperotonta). He wanted answers, more understanding. He thirsted for truth and sought it.
  - c. He answered (apokrisin) their questions.

Note that His questions and answers revealed phenomenal knowledge and understanding, so much so that everyone was astonished, even the teachers or doctors. The word amazed (existanto de) means that all were astonished, overwhelmed, bewildered, and wondered at His understanding.

*Psa 119:99-100 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.*

**Thought 1.** This is a striking lesson for both children and adults.

- 1) Every opportunity to learn the truth should be grasped.
- 2) We should thirst for knowledge and understanding.

**John 8:31-32** *To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

**2 Pet 1:5** *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge.*

**Jer 9:24** *"But let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

**Prov 2:3** *And if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding.*

**Prov 3:13** *Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.*

**Prov 4:5** *Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.*

**Prov 15:14** *The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.*

**Prov 23:23** *Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.*

**Hosea 6:3** *Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.*

## MATHEW 19:01–12

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE: SHAMMAI AND HILLEL SCHOOLS

The Pharisees came to Jesus tempting Him and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

There is a background to this question. The society of Jesus' day was very lax in its morals. Marriage was considered nothing more than a piece of paper: if it worked, fine; if it did not work, fine. One could always divorce.

There were two positions or schools of thought on divorce. Moses had said that any man could divorce his wife if "she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her" (Deu. 24:1).

1. The school of Shammai said that the words some uncleanness meant adultery only. A wife could be as loose and mean as Jezebel, but she was not to be divorced unless she committed adultery.
2. The school of Hillel said that the words some uncleanness meant anything that was not pleasing to the man. One should remember that women were counted

as nothing but property to be possessed by men. They had no rights whatsoever except as a man might wish to give. Of course, this was the position followed by society, for it was the position that allowed human nature to run loose. Women were abused: used and discarded, neglected and violated. They were nothing but chattel property of men and were often considered of less value than property, whether animals or things. Therefore, divorce ran rampant in Christ's day.

The Pharisees wished to embroil Jesus in the controversy between the conservative (Shammai) and liberal view (Hillel). They were simply asking Jesus if He agreed with the school of Hillel: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" (v. 3). No matter which position He took, He would offend and stir up a large number of people, becoming embroiled in a mean controversy. □

#### **IV. *Luke 02:48 Mission of Jesus Misunderstood***

Jesus' mission was misunderstood by His parents. This is seen in Mary's words to Jesus. She was rebuking Jesus rather sternly. In her disturbance and sorrow, she forgot who He was. It is not that she was not to teach and discipline or direct Him; she was. But He was now a young man by law, and He was where He should be, in His Father's house.

*Thought 1.* There is warning here. Too often disturbance and sorrow cause us to forget who Jesus is. We allow circumstances to cloud our minds, to disturb us and bring sorrow into our lives. And we soon forget Jesus, His understanding of the situation and His business of ministering to our needs.

*Deu 4:9* Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

#### **V. *Luke 02:49–50 Recognition of Messiahship***

Jesus' first known recognition of Messiahship was at an early age. This is a very significant point. This is the first time that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Note two points.

1. He called God His Father. Joseph was standing there, so Jesus was gentle in the way He worded His statement, but He was clear and definite in referring to God as His Father. Just when He knew He was the Messiah, the Son of God, is not known; and frankly, all suggestions are pure speculation.

But this fact is known. At age twelve, He was conscious of a unique relationship with God, a relationship unlike other children: God was His Father, and He was the Son of God, the unique Son in the sense that He was the One and Only one who came from the Father (see Jn. 1:14). This is seen even more clearly when Jesus' answer is studied.

2. Jesus was saying to His mother that His Father (God) had been looking after Him. He had been in His Father's house, doing what His Father wanted Him to do; therefore, He was under His Father's care and watchful eye. There was no need for her, His mother, to be worrying.

**Thought 1.** Every man needs to place himself under God's care and watchful eye. A decision to follow Christ as Lord causes God to adopt a person as a child of His and places a person under the Father's care.

3. Jesus was saying that He had work to do for His Father (God), even if that work was not understood. He could not go home with them until He had finished His Father's work. He first had to do what His Father willed.

**John 5:17** *Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."*

**John 9:4** *"As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."*

**John 10:25** *Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me."*

**John 17:4** *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."*

**Thought 1.** Christ is the Son of God, His One and Only Son, the only begotten Son of the Father (Jn. 3:16f).

**Thought 2.** Every person is to serve God first, even if the work is not understood. And it is often not understood. We must be faithful to God and His call even if we are misunderstood and opposed.

**Eccl 12:1** *Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."*

**Thought 3.** Sometimes our families are the strongest opposition confronting our decision and work for God (see Mt. 10:37).

## VI. **Luke 02:51 Jesus' Obedience**

Jesus' obedience to His parents was striking. This is both a beautiful and striking picture. Jesus was subject to His parents; He obeyed them. As the Son of God, He set the perfect example of what a child should be to His parents. He obeyed His parents despite the fact...

- that Joseph was not His true father
- that He was stronger in spirit
- that He was filled with wisdom
- that God was His Father

**Eph 6:1-3** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" — which is the first commandment with a promise — "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."* (see Col 3:20)

**1 Tim 5:4** *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.*

**Prov 20:11** *Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*

**Prov 23:22** *Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

Note that Mary again kept all these things in her heart. In humble faith she said nothing, not talking with relatives or neighbours nor boasting in her Son and His uniqueness. She was quiet, humbly waiting upon God to use Jesus as He so willed. In due time she knew that God would reveal Him and His salvation to the world.

## VII. **Luke 02:52** *Childhood of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' growth was in favour with both God and man.

1. Mentally, Jesus was "filled with wisdom" (v. 40). He learned from teachers and from personal study and thought just as all children learned. Yet He differed from other children in that He learned perfectly, coming short in nothing.

**Thought 1.** Note how few children follow the example of Jesus. Few really seek to learn. Most just take what is assigned and do the minimum that is required. Few pursue real excellence.

2. Physically, He grew in an orderly fashion just as all other children grow.

**Thought 1.** Some children do not develop physically, not like they should. Some are incapable due to deformity or abnormality. However, there are other children who fail to develop as they should because they do not get the physical exercise necessary to develop. They sit around instead of being outside playing and working.

3. Spiritually, He "grew strong [in spirit]" (v. 40) and "in favour with God" (v. 52). He looked to God in perfect obedience, and God nurtured Him in His perfect favour.

**Thought 1.** Note how few children follow the example of Jesus. Few children really grow spiritually. Few are willing to buck the crowd, accepting the challenge of Jesus and standing up for Him.

4. Socially, He grew in favour with men. He was friendly, loving, caring, helpful, unselfish, pure, honest, and humble. He was welcomed by the other families in His community.

**Thought 1.** Note that some children do not follow Jesus' example in developing socially. Some children are not welcomed by other families. ■

LUKE 02:52 GREW — INCREASED (PROEKORTEN)

Grew means to grow steadily, to keep advancing. The picture is that of Jesus' cutting His way through the advancing years just as a pioneer cuts through the wilderness to reach his destination. □