

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 2- Luke 2:41-52

30- Jesus About His Father's Business

May 17, 2009

Luke 2:41-52

This passage is the only account in the entire Bible that teaches us about the young boy Jesus. And there is much we can learn from this passage- so I want to camp here for a while and devote some time to what Luke writes here. This passage is also the beginning of the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy that we just studied where the Holy Spirit spoke through the old man in **Luke 2:35** to tell Mary that a sword will pierce through her heart. Here Jesus begins to distance Himself from His Mother- not out of rebellion- but as the most unique Person Who ever lived- fully God and fully Man. Truly this mother and son relationship was different from any other in history.

Now some people have argued that this story is simply a legend- created by the early Church to fill in some of the gaps about their knowledge of Jesus' Life. So how do we respond to that charge?

First of all- we should be aware that in the second and third centuries- many legends arose about the boy Jesus and were put into numerous false books- which the early Church rejected as not having Apostolic Authority like the four earliest Gospels which we have in our New Testament.

And two things speak for the wisdom of the Church in recognizing two things:

1. There were liars and evil men back then just like there are liars and evil men today who spend their entire lives trying to discredit Jesus and the Bible.
2. The fact that there are no records in the entire Bible except this one about Jesus' childhood shows us unmistakably that the

Apostles and the other writers of the New Testament were not interested in feeding the curiosity of the masses with rumors and legends about Jesus' childhood. They are content to leave almost 30 years of blank space in Jesus' life, because their interest was on the heart of the Gospel- why Jesus came-and not on peripheral things that don't matter.

This passage of inspired and infallible Scripture in **Luke 2** is very *unlike* most of the legends of Jesus' childhood. It does *not* portray Jesus as doing any supernatural deed or speaking in an unduly authoritative way. The story that Luke gives us here reaches its main point- not in a supernatural feat performed by Jesus- but in one simple but profound sentence:

I must be about my Father's business

And I want to contrast the simplicity and the greatness of that one statement with some of the false legends and rumors about Jesus that rose up after His death. For example, this legend is found in what is called, "The Infancy Gospel of Thomas", and was written sometime in the 2nd century by a heretical group called "Gnostics":

When this boy Jesus was five years old he was playing at the ford of a brook, and he gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it at once clean, and commanded it by his word alone. But the son of Annas the scribe was standing there with Joseph; and he took a branch of a willow and (with it) dispersed the water which Jesus had gathered together. When Jesus saw what he had done, he was enraged and said to him: "You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you also shall wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit." And immediately that lad withered up completely; and Jesus departed and went into Joseph's house. But the parents of him that was withered took him away, bewailing his youth, and brought him to Joseph and reproached him: "What a child you have who does such things." After this again he went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: "You shall not go further on your way," and the child immediately fell down and died. But some, who saw what took place, said: "From where does this child spring, since every word is an accomplished deed?"

Here is one more example from what is called, "The Arabic Infancy Gospel":

One day, when Jesus was running about and playing with some children, he passed by the workshop of a dyer called Salem. They had in the workshop many cloths which he had to dye. The Lord Jesus went into the dyer's workshop, took all these cloths, and put them into a cauldron full of indigo. When Salem came and saw that the cloths were spoiled, he began to cry aloud and asked the Lord Jesus, saying: "What have you done to me, son of Mary? You have ruined my reputation in the eyes of all the people of the city; for everyone orders a suitable colour for himself, but you have come and spoiled everything." And the Lord Jesus replied: "I will change for you the colour of any cloth which you wish to be changed"; and he immediately began to take the cloths out of the cauldron, each of them dyed as the dyer wished, until he had taken them all out. When the Jews saw this miracle and wonder, they praised God.

Now keep in mind that these stories are not true- they are fiction- in fact, they were used to attack the Humanity of Jesus- so as to uphold their false teaching. The Apostle John wrote about trying or testing what these evil men wrote as they fully accepted that Jesus was God- but denied that Jesus was a real man in **1John 4:1-3**:

- 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**
- 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;**
- 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**

Like all heresies- these legends are nothing but exaggerated claims made to excite the senses of humans so as to draw them away from the Truth because after you hear such stories- the true inspired account that we find in **Luke 2:41-52** seems a bit boring and dull- but I suggest to you that that is precisely what testifies to its truthfulness. Luke's account here does not appear to be motivated by a desire to

overplay Jesus' uniqueness. The claim to uniqueness is much more subtle and that accords with the way Jesus acted most of the time.

In addition- the Greek language of Luke's account is a translation of the Semitic language of Palestine- which means that it was not created- like most of the legends- in Greek-speaking areas far removed from the land of the eyewitnesses. On the contrary, Luke's account is Jewish in content and language which proves that it originated in Palestine- and the most likely source for this account is Mary- the mother of the Lord- whom we know from history that both Luke and Paul interviewed before Luke wrote this account.

Now from **Luke 1:2**- we have already established that Luke puts a high premium on eyewitness confirmation. And we also know from **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles** that while Paul was imprisoned for two years in Jerusalem and in Caesarea- his sidekick Luke was probably roaming around Jerusalem interviewing old-timers and collecting information for his Story of Salvation that he was going to write to Theophilus. And finally we have already seen three times so far in Luke's Story that he mentioned people keeping experiences in their hearts, that is- remembering them.

For example- In **Luke 1:66**- the good doctor said that all who heard how John the Baptist was born "**kept them in mind, saying, 'What then will this child turn out to be?'**" In **Luke 2:19** after the shepherds had come to Bethlehem, Luke says, "**But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.**" And then here at the end of our text in **Luke 2:51** it says, "**and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart.**"

So isn't the most likely reason for mentioning this storing up of memories to give Theophilus and us a clue as to how Luke, a Gentle foreigner, was able to write as much as he did about Jesus' childhood?

Therefore, in light of how few are the Gospel narratives of the child Jesus- and how much more reserved they are than the false legends and rumors- and how great Luke's concern is to trace things out carefully and confirm it with eyewitnesses- and how Jewish the setting and language is- and how easily available Mary was- all of this serves to utterly discredit the notion that this passage in **Luke 2:41–52** is legendary. And the effort by so many to discredit this passage stems from an unwillingness to own up to the main point of the passage- namely, that Jesus is uniquely the Son of God and that He came to do His Father's Business.

So let's read through this passage and allow me to make some comments as we go to see if we can hit on the main point and any lessons there are for our lives.

Luke 2:41

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

Now here Luke stresses again how devout and law-abiding Jesus' parents were. Remember back in **Luke 2:22, 23, 24,** and **39** how that Mary and Joseph did all that the Mosaic law required. And so by stressing the fact that Jesus' parents went up to Jerusalem every year to keep the Feast of the Passover here in **Luke 2:41**- Luke again tries to help Theophilus accept the fact that, although Jesus was killed by the Jewish teachers- it was not because He was operating outside of the true, God given religion of the 39 Books of the Old Testament.

Luke is trying very hard to convince Theophilus that Jesus was not just another rabble rouser or a Zealot who hated Authority and wanted to overthrow the Roman Government. Luke shows us again and again that Jesus' parents were fully devoted to the Law of Moses. They loved it, they studied it, and they obeyed it. And Luke will show very soon (in chapter 4) the real reason why Jesus- who was a devout Jew, could be rejected and killed by His Own people.

Luke 2:42

And when He became twelve, they went up *there* according to the custom of the Feast;

Now, the fact that this incident happened when Jesus was 12 is probably significant. The 12th year was the final year of preparation for a boy before he entered full participation in the religious life of the synagogue as a priest. Up until that time- his parents- especially his father- was teaching him the commandments of the Law. But at the end of the 12th year- the child goes through a ceremony by which he formally takes on the *yoke* of the Law and becomes a *bar mitzvah* or "son of the Commandment."

And this was the year Jesus chose to stay behind in the Temple. Perhaps, at this crucial turning point in every Jewish boy's life- Jesus wanted to demonstrate subtly for those who had eyes to see that He

would be more than an ordinary Jewish *bar mitzvah*- because His insight into the Commandment was more profound than ordinary men, and His relation to God was unique. Both of these will be evident in a moment.

Luke 2:43-44

43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, 44 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.

Now this is like driving from Gulfport to Atlanta and realizing you left your 12 year old child back in Gulfport and having to drive back again to get him. Only it's worse because they were probably walking.

And two things stand out here- and they seem at first to be inconsistent.

1. There is Jesus' apparent disregard for His Own parents' time and feelings.
2. There is the steadfast faith that Mary and Joseph have in their 12 year old son.

Now if Jesus had been an irresponsible Child- His parents would have never gone a whole day without knowing His whereabouts. Mary and Joseph trusted Jesus and they knew that He had good judgment.

And this suggests that Jesus' motive in staying behind was not carelessness or disrespect. Evidently He *intentionally* let them go in order to demonstrate something more forcefully.

Luke 2:43-46

43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, 44 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. 45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. 46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

Now there is no way for us to know whether this means three days since leaving Jerusalem (one out, one back, and one in search), or whether it means three days searching in Jerusalem. It's hard to imagine three days searching in Jerusalem because, probably, Jesus and His parents would have gone to the same place to spend the night. So I am inclined to believe that this as a total of three days- one out, one back into Jerusalem, and one day spent searching for Jesus in Jerusalem.

Now just how Mary and Joseph and Jesus feel about this search comes out later in verses 48 and 49. But first let's look at:

Luke 2:46&47

46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

Now these two verses set my mind to thinking about all sorts of things that I'd love to talk about for hours. One is the relationship between teachers and students, and the role of listening, and asking questions and answering. Another is the mystery of how the Divine and human natures unite in the one Person, Jesus. If Jesus is God- how can He *increase* in wisdom, as verse 52 says that He does? And finally, these verses sparks in my mind a scene 18 years later when perhaps some of these very same teachers would gnash their teeth at this 12 year old Boy grown up as a 30 year old man and want to kill Him. Let me make just a few observations about each of these three topics.

First, Theophilus should understand that Jesus knew and loved the Law of God from an early age, and that in the very city where He was hated and rejected and lynched 20 years later- He was approved and marveled at- at the age of 12. Or maybe Jesus wasn't really approved after all. You know you can be astonished at something you really don't like. And so maybe the teachers of the Law did *not* care for the implications of Jesus' answers, but a 12 year Child is not really a threat like a 30 year old man. So they could just pat the 12 year old on the head and say, "Smart kid," and return to their hair splitting and their hypocrisy.

But there's an analogy about that in our experience today. For example- a young boy gets saved, say at a football stadium, and he returns to his unbelieving home and tells his dad about Jesus. The dad smiles condescendingly as if to say that's nice for kids. But then the boy grows into a man and is aflame with the Spirit and the issues sharpen and the different destinies come into focus, and the dad can't be indifferent any more. And so conflict and crisis comes: It is conversion or alienation. Jesus said in **Matthew 12:30- He who is not with me is against me.**

But, secondly- our text has important implications for understanding the Divinity of Jesus Christ. And it helps us to understand what Paul meant when he said in **Philippians 2:6&7:**

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

Now the term that was used here that says Jesus, "**emptied himself**" actually means that Jesus "made himself of no reputation". And one of the things Jesus emptied Himself of- was His Own Omniscience- that character of God that says that God knows everything about everything.

And we know this is true- at least to some extent because Jesus Himself said in **Mark 13:32** concerning the time of His return:

But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Similarly, here in our text- Jesus is not just playing games with the scribes. But clearly- His questions are so he can gain insight because verse 52 says, "He *increased* in wisdom."

So it is not easy to imagine how Christ can be God and not be Omniscient and know everything. But the incarnate Christ was able somehow to bracket or *limit* the actual exercise of His Divine Powers so that He had the *personality* of God (basically, the Motives and the Will of God), but the Powers of knowing all and the infinite Strength of God- Jesus was evidently able to somehow willingly restrain or limit in order

to maintain His full Humanity- which is why Jesus could be God and still die.

These Divine Attributes were potentially fully His- and thus He was God, but Jesus emptied Himself or surrendered their use absolutely, and so while He was fully God- Jesus was also fully Man. This is what the 4th Century preacher- John Chrysostom was talking about when he said that Jesus was,

"Fully God and fully Man; in the same Body; at the same time; without conflict of contradiction"

In order for Jesus not to be in conflict between His full Divinity and His full Humanity- He had to limit Himself like this all the time so that His Deity would not overshadow His Humanity. Now I know that most people today couldn't care less about any of this- but that is one of the things that I think is terribly wrong with the modern Church. We should care and we should ponder these things and marvel at them. And I will speak more about these things, Lord willing, next week.

Many would say today that we need to stop concerning ourselves over minute details about the nature of Christ's Divinity and spend more time teaching Man how to be rich and happy- while I say that dwelling on Jesus and dwelling on His Divinity and His Humanity is the wisest and the best use of our time because it is Worship and it causes us to wonder after God and it causes us to marvel at the Perfections of Jesus Christ and it causes us to tremble in His Presence.

And when we do that- when we wonder and when we marvel and when we tremble- God is honored and He is valued and He is respected and He is glorified- and that I suggest to you that- that is the purpose of Church.

It is the difference in looking at a mirror and seeing how beautiful you are and seeing how you can improve your own condition and how you can hide that zit on your nose versus standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon and looking at something so huge and so impossible and so powerful that it takes your breath away and it forces you to open your mouth and gape and it makes you feel small and it puts all your own problems into perspective.

There is nothing else the Church should be about other than wondering after the greatness and the grandeur and the unspeakable

beauty of Jesus, and nothing we should do other than be in awe of Jesus and standing with our mouths open at Jesus, and the result is that we will decrease and we will become small and we will become unimportant and all of our problems will be put into perspective in a moment, and the result is that we will tremble and we will fall down and we will worship and we will abandon ourselves to this radical religion that teaches that a holy God saves unworthy sinners, and we will actually live for no other reason other than to serve Jesus and to adore Him and to follow after Him and to obey Him- so that Christ may be glorified and in the process of doing that- our joy will become full because that is why we were created, and when you are doing that for which you were created there is the fullness of satisfaction and the fullness of accomplishment and the fullness of purpose.

Therefore the Child standing before us here in the Temple is not so different that He can't serve as an example for us and our children today.

And this brings us to the third topic triggered by verses 46 and 47 because I think we can learn four things here from the way that Jesus related with these teachers:

1. Jesus sought out teachers and He sat in their midst
2. Jesus listened
3. Jesus asked questions
4. Jesus gave answers

And what I get from this is that if the Son of God sought out teachers and listened and asked questions and gave answers about the things of God- how much more should God's people do these things- especially those who are preparing for the ministry. How much more should we seek out teachers, how much more should we listen and ask questions and read and study and ponder and meditate and examine and seek after?

If I learned one thing from all of my studies and all of the time that I have spent agonizing over the Word of God- struggling to understand it- it is that most people are not eager to understand more about God than what they already understand. That's why every year less time is spent in God's Word than the year before. I would say less than a tenth of all the people that I have ever met are actually what I

would call "hungry" to see how all these things fit together and eager to drink at history's great wells of wisdom.

And that's bad enough but the real tragedy is when we see this laid back and cavalier attitude about the deep and profound things of God in our Pulpits and with our Pastors and Elders and Teachers and in the divinity schools where the pastor and teachers are being trained. How little zeal there is today for very many to tackle the glorious Revelation of God in the Bible and understand it from cover to cover—and to try to fit it together into a grand unity!

Almost 400 years ago- on page 68 of his great classic- *The Reformed Pastor*- the Puritan, Richard Baxter said this,

"Take heed to yourselves that you want not the qualifications necessary to your work. He must not be himself a babe in knowledge, that will teach men all those mysterious things which must be known in order to salvation. O what qualifications are necessary for a man who hath such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity to be solved! And these too about the fundamental principles of religion! How many obscure texts of scripture to be expounded!"

And almost 30 years ago- the great Anglican Theologian John Stott said this,

"The current crop of men who occupy the pulpits of the modern Church are the most theological illiterate men that the Church has known in its 2,000 year history and I see nothing on the horizon that is going to reverse that trend."

I feel tremendously challenged by the example of Jesus and the admonition of Baxter and Stott to strive for increased wisdom and understanding of the Scriptures. And I urge all of you- especially those who lead or who want to lead to find yourself a wise teacher who loves the whole counsel of God. Listen to that man, ask him questions, and keep asking until it all begins to fit together, and have him ask you questions, and give him your answers- because if this is what Jesus did- then we should do it too.

I think it is a tragedy that we are being robbed of curiosity and the desire to know, and I will tell you this in all honesty that I firmly

believe that one of the biggest robbers of that curiosity and desire to learn is television and the mindless dribble that comes from it.

In my lifetime- our culture has moved from a society that gets its information primarily through reading and studying and asking questions and investigating and reasoning- to a society that is basically entertaining itself to death. And the casualty is that we no longer read as a culture and that is why I am trying so hard to reverse that trend and get you to read- read your Bibles, read the Puritans, read the handouts that I give you- because that is the only way you learn. If the only time you read your Bibles is here on Sunday Morning- then you will never stand in the great trouble that is coming. If the only time you really pray is on Tuesday Nights- you will never stand when it becomes against the law to be a practicing Christian in the United States. Please hear me, dear friends, and engage yourself to learn the ways of God.

Luke 2:48-50

48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.”

49 And He said to them, “**Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?**”

50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

Now the last statement— “**they did not understand the statement which He had made to them**” - this is Luke's way of saying to us, the reader: *“There's more here than meets the eye. This is the point, don't miss it”* (cf. **Luke 18:34**).

Remember Mary and Joseph were searching and searching and finally they find Jesus at the Temple. Where did they search? In the playground, the local swimming hole, in the shops, at the bakery. They searched anywhere- all over Jerusalem- from anywhere from one to three days depending on how you look at it for Jesus. They went everywhere that they thought that other normal children would be.

But Jesus answers them: *“You shouldn't have had to seek in all those other places to find me. You should have known that I wouldn't be there. And the fact that you did search in all those other places before you thought about looking in the Temple only shows that you*

really didn't comprehend who I am or what I am all about because I am only here to do my Father's Business.

So the main point of this whole passage lies in the contrast between the phrases "your father" and "my father." Mary says, "Your father and I have been searching for you." But Jesus answers, "You should have known I would be about My Father's Business" In other words, Jesus has chosen this crucial stage in His life- on the very brink of manhood- to tell His parents in an unforgettable way that He now knows who His real Father is and what that is going to mean for His Life and mission.

And it also shows us that even though all of this has happened to Joseph and Mary- that they really didn't fully understand Jesus yet. Joseph and Mary were very devout people- and they loved God- but they did not comprehend Who Jesus is just yet. Mary is yet to know Jesus as she would later on.

How could these two people travel a day's journey and not know where Jesus was? How could they go about their daily lives and Jesus not be with them- and they didn't know He was not with them? And how far do we go- just doing what we always do- and then suddenly find that Jesus is not even with us- and that He was never with us to begin with? I will get into that in more depth next week, Lord willing.

And the fact that they go looking for Jesus all over the place- thinking that their Son- Who was announced by an angel and who was the Son of God- might be somewhere besides the Temple- only shows that both Joseph and Mary were going to be startled at Jesus like everybody else.

And one thing that it is going to mean for Mary is exactly what Simeon said to her in **Luke 2:35**,

... and a sword will pierce even your own soul

The time will come when Jesus will be killed at Jerusalem, and after three days He will rise from the dead, and that will be a great pain to Mary. And Mary will witness one of the greatest mysteries in all recorded history- that the Jews will reject the Messiah- Who came to save them- and her heart will be pierced.

And this three-day vigil of Mary and Joseph is a foreshadowing of that piercing experience that God has called Mary to. Mary said, "*Your father and I have been seeking sorrowing or in pain.*"

So the main teaching of this passage is that Jesus now recognizes His unique Sonship to God, and that His mission will require of Him a devotion to God's Purposes so great that it takes precedence over the closest of family ties. And Jesus must follow His Calling- even if it brings pain and misunderstanding to His Own Mother- which it already is beginning to do.

So in this way Luke sets the stage for the adult ministry of the Son of God. So hold on to your hats- you ain't seen nothing yet.

Let's come and pray.

© 2008- 2014 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1996 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.