

What do we know about our Savior? We know a lot about his birth ... we know some about his ministry ... and we know much about his suffering – his death and resurrection – but not a lot about his childhood. The only glimpse that we have about the childhood of our Savior, the Lord Jesus is that which we read in our Gospel lesson from this morning from Luke 2:41-52 – so I ask that you turn with me there.

Before we look at the passage, there is one other interesting fact in view here – it is the last time in the Scriptures that we read about Joseph. We know that Joseph was just man ... we know that he loved and protected Mary and the baby Jesus. We know that it was Joseph that took them both to Egypt when the life of Jesus was in danger ... and we know that he then returned to Nazareth where he raised Jesus. But after the events that we will look at in a moment, we hear nothing more about Joseph.

Let's look at Luke 2. Verse 41 sets the stage for us: 2:41: "*His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.*" There were three feasts that had to be observed in Jerusalem – and the Passover was one of them. Now we see that Mary and Joseph were observant Jews – that is, they practiced what they believed. And remember, in those days travel was not that easy, and it was about 80 miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

Verse 42 tells us that Jesus went with them. It is probable that he went with them every year, but Jewish custom held that a child would be taken a year or two before his 13th birthday to be presented in the Temple, because when they were 13 he would then be considered an adult member of the Jewish religious community.

The custom of the Feast of the Passover, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread was that it should be observed for seven days. It was at the end of the Feast, that we read that Jesus lingered in the Temple. We read something interesting – and that is, that his parents didn't know that he stayed behind. To us, that might seem a bit strange.

However, remember, that there were a large number of pilgrims that had made their way to Jerusalem, so it might have been easy to assume that the boy Jesus was with his friends. The other option that might be in view here is that the women and children traveled together, with the men following them. So perhaps Mary thought that Jesus might have been with Joseph and Joseph could have thought that Jesus was with Mary.

In either cases, they had traveled about a day when they realized that Jesus was not with them – they checked with their relatives ... they checked with their friends, but Jesus was nowhere to be found – and like any parents, they were concerned.

So they did the logical thing – they returned to Jerusalem. The Scriptures tell us that it took three days to find him – we don't know if this included the travel back, remember that they had already gone a day's journey back to Nazareth. But they finally found him in the Temple – and we read some telling words in 2:46: "*Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.*"

Historians tell us that the Temple courts were used for teaching – and one of the ways of learning was asking questions and have discussions. Students would ask the questions and then learn from the answers to their questions. Now, try to picture this – Jesus was 12 years old – he had not yet been recognized as an adult – and

yet here he was in the midst of the Jewish scholars – and as we read: *sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.*

At first glance you might think that Jesus would be the one doing all the teaching – after all, he was God in the flesh – but here we see the personality of our Savior – the humility in his life. Now, it is possible that he was just testing them, but I don't think that is the case, because of what we read next: 2:47: *“And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.”*

Remember, these were the Rabbi's ... the teachers of the law of God and yet they were astonished by Jesus – his understanding and his answers. Two things are possible here – either the scholars were not very bright and that even though they were the teachers, they didn't have all of the answers. I don't know if this is the case.

The other possibility is that Jesus was explaining the true meaning of the law. Remember that during his ministry, he often began his teaching with a phrase like: *“you have heard it said ... but I say unto you ...”* and then he proceed to teach the real meaning of the law of God. At that time the Scribes and the Pharisees had so distorted the Law of God that it made it almost impossible for anyone to keep it. Except, course the Scribes and Pharisees who THOUGHT they were keeping the law.

We know that this is not true, because through out the ministry of Jesus we read of his condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Just look at Matthew 23 where Jesus pronounces woe and them and calls them whitewashed tombs and hypocrites!

In any event his parents finally find him, and as most parents would be, there were worried and upset, hence the question of his mother, Mary – 2:48: *“So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”*

Mary wants to know why Jesus had caused them so much trouble. That is an interesting thought. We know that Jesus was without sin, so we know that it was not a rebellious attitude – and his answer reveals that it was simply something that he had to do — 2:49: *“And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”*

Even at the tender age of 12, Jesus knew who he was. He knew what he had come to do. But, there is also a gentle rebuke in his answer to Mary. Think about it – both Mary and Joseph knew the unique circumstances of his birth. They knew that he had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. They knew that he was the long promised Messiah. And they should have realized that God would protect him and that they did not have to worry about him.

But they were only human – and in their humanity they did what many parents would do – they worried about their son – who at 12 years old knew that he was different from the boys around him ... he knew that he was God in the flesh who had come to earth for a purpose – and that was to accomplish his Father's will and to do his Father's business. And that is exactly what he was doing in the Temple.

As I said, this is the only picture that we have in the scriptures of the childhood of Jesus and the last time that we read anything of Joseph. It would 18 years before Jesus would begin his public ministry and that is the next time that we hear anything about him.

But our passage does not end there – it ends with a commentary by Luke, again written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – 2:51-52: “*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*”

As a dutiful son, he was obedient to his parents. He probably learned the trade of his father – a carpenter. As I said, Jesus was as we are, and yet without sin. And it is in that capacity that he was obedient to his parents. Note the scriptures – *and was subject to them*

And then as Luke notes, we continue to see the personal development of the person of Jesus – *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

So, while we are not told much about the childhood of Jesus, we know a couple of important things. First, the Scriptures tell us that God has given us everything that we need for life and godliness – in other words how to live in this world and the world to come. What we don’t know about the childhood of Jesus, we simply don’t need to know. We can speculate, but it is really not necessary.

Secondly, we see in the events that we looked at today more of the humanity of our Savior. Remember, he was fully God and fully man, and that is what was in view in the passage that we studied today.

Let us be thankful for what we know and thankful that we indeed have a great Savior and a great Salvation.