

Why Did Jesus Go to the Temple at Age 12?
Luke 2:39-52
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"After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." - Luke 2:46-47, ESV

Today, we come to one of the most unique and puzzling passages in the Gospels. This is really the only incident we have from the childhood of Jesus. It is also the last glimpse we have of Joseph in the life of Jesus. It is also the one time we see Jesus do something that looks like it could be considered wrong. It does appear that his parents thought he was wrong.

I'd like to consider why Jesus did this and what it shows us about Him.

- 1. Jesus was maturing and was entering spiritual manhood.** At age 12, boys in the Jewish culture were marked out as men before God, expected to enter into their own study of Torah and to mature beyond the childhood basic teaching of their parents. As Jesus was making this transition, He was also passing from the temporary guardianship of Joseph into the direct care of His Heavenly Father.
- 2. Jesus was demonstrating His knowledge and understanding.** Jesus was putting on a display for the religious leaders in Jerusalem as a sign. One of the signs of Messiah was to be great wisdom in understanding.
- 3. Jesus was showing His devotion to the Law of God.** Jesus was a devoted student of Torah, and He was demonstrating how much He had studied and how much He understood.
- 4. Jesus was showing His full humanity as well as His position as the Son of God.** Jesus was truly human, and He grew in wisdom and in understanding, He did so perfectly, of course, unhindered by sin. Nonetheless, He still had to learn and grow. He is showing us this here. As He grew in His understanding of Scripture, He also grew in His self-awareness as the Son of God, understanding His position and His call.
- 5. Jesus was embodying Psalm 1,** as the man who is blessed because He delights in the Law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. He was doing this as the Man who was to redeem humanity in Himself.

There is much more we could say about this passage. We could also speculate on what Jesus might have asked or said to these leaders. Some things we can't know, but we can know this: Jesus was fully human and grew in the knowledge of God and His word, only He did so in a way that was so much more perfect and wonderful than anyone else ever has. This should encourage us to walk in His footsteps!