

**Message #12****Luke 2:41-52**

In the course of my Biblical studies, I had the privilege of formally studying two Biblical languages. One is N.T. Greek and the other is O.T. Hebrew. Now when I was in school these were not required courses, but electives. So if you were going to study those languages, you had to choose to do it. At our school, if you signed up for an elective course and then for some reason didn't like it or want it, you had a few days to get out of it and get your money back. What I saw happen with both languages was interesting.

Initially, in the first class the classroom was packed. People were excited about learning Biblical Greek and Hebrew. At the first class the teacher would pass out a syllabus and go over course requirements. The first class always featured the same thing—memorize the alphabet because you will be tested on it the next class period. Just by way of observation, after that first class, about half dropped out. After a couple of weeks, the number dwindled and in our Hebrew class, when the dust settled, there were four of us. The thing about learning anything like a Biblical language is it requires hard work. I love what one writer said, “The trouble with these ‘How to Succeed’ books is that you find out from them you have to work for it.”

If you were to ask most people do you think it is a good goal to be like Jesus Christ, I am convinced most would say yes. After all, we even sing hymns about that—“To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask is to be like Him.” Now if that is the goal, what we learn is to reach it, we will have to have a high level of commitment to the Word of God. We will have to devote ourselves to accurately understanding God's Word because Jesus did that at a young age.

Christlikeness is not produced overnight; it is produced over a long period of time and it comes by a serious commitment to the Word of God. If ever there is a text that establishes that, it is this one. Frederic Godet, who wrote a commentary on Luke, said, “Here we have the first glimpse of spiritual greatness.” In fact, the last verse of this chapter ends by saying Jesus had the favor of God (Luke 2:52). What we see from this text is this:

**JESUS CHRIST INCREASED IN FAVOR WITH GOD BY HIS INTENSE COMMITMENT TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD, EVEN AT A YOUNG AGE.**

If we are truly interested in being like Jesus, we will need to be very serious about listening to the Word of God and learning it. We will have a hunger to go to worship with a focus on hearing God's Word and understanding it precisely. That, in part, is what it means to be like Jesus.

Now Dr. Luke is the only writer who gives us a glimpse of the early life of Jesus Christ. The glimpse he tracked down occurred when Jesus was 12. What we learn is that at age 12, Jesus was not sitting in a stadium watching a game; he was not sitting in the woods hunting an animal; He was not sitting in front of a TV watching a program; He was not sitting in front of an iPad or phone texting a message; **He was sitting in the Temple listening to the Word of God.**

He did not want to be in some youth group or children's church; He was in the Temple with the adults. There are three historical observations we want to see from this unique text:

**HISTORICAL OBSERVATION #1** – Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year to the Passover feast in perfect conformity to O.T. law. **2:41**

As Luke begins telling the story, which Mary told him, he starts it off by focusing on the faithfulness and piety of Joseph and Mary. The O.T. demanded that Jewish men come to Jerusalem for three main festivals: 1) Passover; 2) Pentecost; 3) Tabernacles (Ex. 34:22-23; Deut. 16:16). So only Joseph was required to go to these gatherings. But it is clear at the Passover gathering, he took Mary and Jesus.

By the time we reach the first century, the main festival was the Passover. Every year, Joseph and Mary would make the trip to Jerusalem. Now since only the men were required to go, if a man took his wife and children, it was a tremendous sign of dedication to God.

There are two routes that you may travel to get from Nazareth to Jerusalem: Route 6 which is 89 miles or Route 90 which is 100 miles. Now back at this time you didn't jump in a car and drive for 2 ½ hours to get there; you walked or rode an animal. A typical day's journey was 15-20 miles. So a typical caravan would take 3-4 days to make the trip. This was no easy trip, but every year Joseph and Mary made the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, which was in perfect obedience to the Law of God (Ex. 12:11-20; 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16-17).

What we see here is that Jesus was being raised by faithful parents, who demonstrated faithfulness to God and His Word. Children raised in that environment have a tremendous opportunity to accomplish great things for God.

**HISTORICAL OBSERVATION #2** – Jesus went with His parents to Jerusalem with an intense desire to understand God's Word. **2:42-50**

There are five key facts brought out here that we want to see:

**Fact #1** - Jesus was 12-years-old. **2:42**

According to the Jewish Mishnah, age 12 was one year before a Jewish boy became responsible for his religious commitments (Mishnah, Niddah 5.6). At age 13, a bar mitzvah service was held, thus declaring the boy responsible for his religious education and worship. The bat mitzvah age for girls is 12. Actually there was no such thing as Bar Mitzvah at the time of Jesus. That did not surface until several hundred years after this period of time.

What we see about Jesus is that at age 12, He loved being in the Temple and when we look at **verses 46 and 49**, He loved being taught the Word of God. He was a 12-year-old boy with a tremendous desire to learn and understand God's Word.

**Fact #2** - Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem after His parents left Jerusalem. **2:43**

According to Exodus 12:15 and Leviticus 23:8, the period of time spent in Jerusalem was eight days. Seven days for the Feast and one day for the Passover. That Passover week was the week when Israel remembered the great deliverances of God. Some people came into Jerusalem for the Passover and some stayed the whole seven day period, which was obviously the case here.

During that time the Scriptures were constantly read and taught in the Temple. Jesus was in the Temple listening and learning. He wanted more and more of an understanding of God's Word to the point that eight days was not enough. For most people, eight days of solid church would be plenty, but not for Him. He could not get enough of the Word of God.

It is nothing today for children to sit down and watch 3-4 hours of TV or to play 3-4 hours of video games or to text and talk on I phones many hours a night. But to get parents to say to their children you are going to church Sunday morning and Sunday night to hear the Word of God expounded for 35 to 40 minutes, is almost impossible.

Jesus Christ literally wanted to hear God's Word for hours and those who want to be like Him will have that same desire.

One thing that is interesting in this verse is that Jesus is qualified and identified as being "the boy Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς ὁ παῖς). What this tells us is that He was a boy, not a girl, and also He was not a full-grown man nor was He some little child.

**Fact #3** - Jesus' parents were unaware that He was still at the Temple when they left. **2:43b-46**

Jesus Christ was totally focused on the Word of God and He was so focused that when His parents left Jerusalem, He didn't leave. He was riveted on studying the Scriptures.

Because Nazareth was 90-100 miles from Jerusalem, Jewish families and friends would form a caravan and travel together. There were dangers in traveling a distance like that and there is safety in numbers. So many people from Nazareth would team travel. Joseph and Mary were not strict legalists who would not let Jesus go off with others.

Typically the women and younger children were up toward the front and the men and older children were toward the back. Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was with the others and that is why one could travel a day and not actually see their child until evening.

A typical day's journey was 15-20 miles, and **verse 44** makes it clear that they had traveled that distance when they realized Jesus was not with them. According to **verse 45**, when they could not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. So what you have is a travel that is one day out of Jerusalem and one day back to Jerusalem and then He was found on day three (**verse 46**).

There are a couple of things to consider here. You would think that of all of the children Joseph and Mary had, the one you would certainly not lose track of would be Jesus. It is true that He is the oldest of the children and perhaps because of that, they gave him more flexibility because they had their hands full watching the younger children. They had four other boys and plus some girls (Matt. 13:55-56; Mark 6:3).

Now some have thought it was inconsiderate of Jesus to stay in the Temple and listen to the Word of God. But there are some key Biblical thoughts to consider:

**(Thought #1)** - Jesus is perfectly holy even as a child. Luke 1:35b

His desire is always to obey God and never disobey God. He is holy at all times, in all situations.

**(Thought #2)** - Jesus Christ is always right in His desires and use of time.

He was right in wanting to stay in Jerusalem to learn God's Word. There is no greater use of time than to listen and learn God's Word. Jesus would say years later, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6).

**(Thought #3)** - Jesus Christ knows what God's perfect will is at every moment. **Luke 2:49**

The will of His Father was for Him to be in the Temple listening and learning the Word of God. The problem here was Joseph and Mary's lack of knowledge.

**(Thought #4)** - Jesus Christ pleased God the Father by this action. **Luke 2:52**

This may have upset Joseph and Mary, but it pleased God.

There are times when doing God's will contradicts what those close to you think. For example, I do not believe a wife or a husband should ever submit to a mate who says you should not go to church. You may please your mate if you stay home, but you will not please God.

I don't think God is pleased when people go to a church that does not carefully teach the Scriptures. This was the focus of Jesus Christ. Some husbands and wives need to say I am travelling to a different church, where I can be taught the Word of God. That pleases God.

**Fact #4** - Jesus was focused on understanding God's Word by listening to teachers and asking good questions. **2:46-47**

Now at Passover time, the best teachers would have been in Jerusalem at the Temple and could have lectured and taught on various books of the Bible and doctrinal subjects. Jesus loved it and He took full advantage of it. Some people say we don't need scholarly teachers. If that is the way you think, you aren't like Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ went to the Temple to learn the Word of God. He was a phenomenal student at age 12. This is a 12-year-old boy and He is sitting in the Temple listening to scholarly teachers.

**This is the only account in the Bible where Jesus is taking in instruction from Jewish teachers. He is listening and learning.** He spent hours carefully listening to God's Word. He is not sitting in the Temple listening to music or watching some entertaining, religious light show or some shallow warm-the-heart talk; He is in the Temple carefully listening to the Word of God.

**Verse 46** makes it clear that as He carefully listened to the teachers, He asked them very deep and complex questions.

According to **verse 47**, what amazed the Biblical scholars were His questions and His answers. He had a unique ability to interpret God's Word like no other they had ever heard.

In fact, those words "understanding" and "answers" indicate that these teachers were amazed by His level of intelligence in the things of God. He had a depth level of understanding that enabled Him to distinguish and judge things from God's Word and comment on things that were very complicated and deep theologically.

Keep in mind this is a 12-year-old boy, but He is no ordinary 12-year-old. I want to make three observations about this:

- 1) Jesus Christ saw the tremendous importance of learning God's Word at age 12.
- 2) Jesus Christ saw the importance of learning from teachers who knew God's Word.
- 3) Jesus Christ saw the importance of going to the Temple to learn God's Word.

W. H. Griffith Thomas said, "When people discover the Word of God is taught, they should be found often in God's House."

**Fact #5** - Jesus' parents did not understand what Jesus was doing. **2:48-50**

When Jesus' parents found Him in the Temple, they were astonished. This particular Greek word means to drive out by a blow or by striking someone. A modern choice of words is that when they saw Him, they were blown away and upset.

They had been frantically looking for Jesus, and they reacted like normal parents would react. They were worried sick.

**Verse 49 is the first recorded words we have that come directly from Jesus Christ.** Dr. Luke tracked down the very words Jesus said. The words Jesus says are the result of what Mary said in **verse 48**.

Mary said what most parents say, “Why are you treating us like this?” “Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” I love something William Van Doren said, Mary did not understand things until, years later, Jesus would change the noun from “mother to woman” (John 2:4). She would realize Jesus Christ was the Son of God, not the Son of Joseph and Mary.

Now in answering His mother, what Jesus does in **verse 49** is ask two questions: “Why is it that you were looking for Me?” “Do you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?” The last question expects a “yes” answer.

What Christ says in **verse 49** is I am right where My Father wants Me to be; in fact, “I had” to be here. In other words, I am doing the Will of God. In strong Greek, Jesus says I have to be “in My Father’s House.” **The Temple in Jerusalem was said to be, by Jesus Christ Himself, His Father’s House. He had to be there involved in instruction from the Word of God.**

Before they left Jerusalem, they should have gone to the Temple, knowing that is where Jesus would be. He would not be out with the boys.

Wherever you find serious teaching of God’s Word that is where you will find the real power and presence of Jesus Christ.

Jesus knew He needed to be in Jerusalem, not Nazareth. He needed to be involved in taking in instruction from the Scriptures. His parents didn’t get it yet. This was not some 12-year-old “adolescent rebellion.” In fact, according to **verse 50**, they did not understand what He was saying.

**HISTORICAL OBSERVATION #3** – Jesus submitted Himself to Joseph and Mary and went back to Nazareth. **2:51-52**

Jesus knew God’s will; Joseph and Mary did not, but Jesus submitted Himself to them as they travelled back to Jerusalem.

Notice Mary treasured these things in her heart. Luke got this from Mary, I am totally convinced of that. Mary was getting glimpses that Jesus was not like the other children. He was special.

Jesus went back to Nazareth and continued to progress and advance in wisdom (intellectually); in stature (physically) and in favor with God (spiritually) and in favor with men (socially).

Jesus was a likeable boy. He did carpentry work and people liked Him and His work. He had a driving passion to know God’s Word at age 12 and He began His public ministry about age 30. So Jesus Christ learned the Word of God for 18 years and then taught it for three.

Do you have a deep desire to accurately understand the written Scriptures? That desire is truly a desire that is like Jesus.