

# The Boy Who Was God

Luke 2:39-52

## 1. Introduction.

- a. We come to the apex of the infancy narrative. The entire account has been driving toward this passage. In fact, this passage is the launching point for the rest of the Gospel.
- b. Throughout the first two chapters, Luke has been using the characters as witnesses to the true Christ. The passage before us is Jesus' own testimony concerning Himself and His mission.
  - i. This passage is the only record we have of Jesus between His birth and ministry.
  - ii. It records Jesus' earliest words.

## 2. The Background (39-40, 52).

- a. Mary and Joseph are careful to obey all the Law's requirements, revealing their righteous character (39).
  - i. Law of Purification (Lev. 12).
  - ii. Jesus was placed under Mosaic Law.
- b. Structure of the passage:
  - i. Vss. 40 and 52 function as bookends to this section. They each speak of the same point, and cover a period of about 30 years.
  - ii. Vss. 41-51 reveal a short episode in this 30 year period when Jesus is 12 years old.
- c. Short Excurses: The Hypostatic Union.
  - i. This is a very mysterious doctrine, but essential and foundational for understanding why Jesus came into the world.
  - ii. The hypostatic union is the idea that Jesus is fully God, yet fully man.

1. In becoming man, Jesus relinquished nothing of His divinity.
  2. He was still the eternal second person of the Trinity.
  3. However, He was still human in every sense of the term.
    - a. He became a man—a creature.
    - b. He fully understood, then, what it meant to be finite.
  4. The hypostatic union *doesn't* mean that Jesus was simply God wrapped in flesh.
    - a. Jesus wasn't the Spirit of God inserted into a human body.
    - b. Jesus wasn't God taking over a human body.
    - c. Rather, we must keep in mind that Jesus was still fully human.
  5. Like every other major doctrine of the Christian faith, we must embrace mystery.
  6. It's important to get the doctrine right because it has significant ramifications for what you understand Jesus to have accomplished on the cross on behalf of man.
- d. The purpose of Luke in vss. 40 and 52, is to draw attention to Jesus' humanity. John's Gospel focuses on Jesus divinity, but Luke's Gospel focuses on His humanity.
- i. "Continued to grow" speaks of Jesus' physical nature.
  - ii. "Increasing in wisdom" grammatically modifies the verb "became strong."
    1. It describes how Jesus became strong, namely, by God's wisdom.
    2. As such, this speaks to His spiritual nature and growth.
    3. "Increasing in wisdom" is the idea that He was in the state of being continually filled with the very wisdom and mind of God. Yet the mystery of this is that He still *grew* in this wisdom.

4. So while he was normal like every other human child, he was also unlike any other human child. He was fully human, yet still, fully God. A deep mystery.
    - iii. “The grace of God was upon Him.” This speaks to the idea that God’s favor was with Him. The Father cared for Him in a special and unique way.
      1. God’s grace was how this special knowledge and wisdom of God came to Jesus.
      2. Jesus possessed a matchless favor from the Father. He experienced a knowledge and awareness of God that no human had.
      3. The result is that Jesus was unlike every other person. He was extraordinary, and possessed an incomprehensible nature. We simply can’t understand the fullness of it.
3. The Setting (41-42).
  - a. Jewish custom observed three great festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.
  - b. Passover was the big one.
    - i. It was a one-day celebration.
    - ii. The Passover Celebration was then followed by 7 days of “The Festival of Unleavened Bread.”
  - c. According to Exodus and Deuteronomy, only men were required to attend. Later, Jewish teachers taught that it was good for the nation for women and children to attend as well. If an entire family attended, they were considered devout. This was Mary and Joseph.
4. The Lost Boy (43-46a).
  - a. Jesus is assumed to be among the caravan.
  - b. They spend three days looking for him (46a).
5. Jesus in the Temple (46b-48).

- a. Jesus is sitting among the elites of the day. It was Passover, so all the influential, great teachers of the day would have been present. And yet Jesus, an unknown boy from an obscure village, is engaged in dialogue.
  - b. As Jesus speaks, the people were amazed (ἐξίστημι). This speaks of being confused and perplexed—and typically, at a marvelous act of God.
    - i. Luke 8:56.
    - ii. Acts 2:7, 12.
    - iii. Acts 8:31.
    - iv. Acts 9:21.
  - c. Moreover, Jesus is said to have “understanding (47).” The term speaks of deep insights that penetrate the heart.
  - d. When Jesus’ parents enter, they’re astonished. This is a different term than “amazement” in v.47. Rather, this speaks to astonishment over the fact they found their son.
    - i. They completely miss the reality of what’s taking place.
    - ii. Moreover, their words indicate frustration and anger.
6. Jesus’ Response (49-51).
- a. Jesus responds with two rhetorical questions. The questions have an implied answer of “yes.” As such, the idea is that Mary and Joseph should have known the answers, despite them not understanding (c.f., 50).
  - b. Jesus makes a contrast with his earthly father (c.f., Mary’s words in v. 47), and His true Father.
    - i. The point is that Jesus is making a declaration of His true identity, and therefore separates Himself from Mary and Joseph in terms of this identity. His identity is bound up with divinity.
    - ii. Further, the statement is a declaration of His mission (“I must be about my Father...”).

1. The key term is “must/necessary.”
2. It’s a term used by Luke to speak of prophesy and fulfillment.
3. It’s used 12 times in Luke. 10 are in reference to Jesus, and 7 of those 10 speak of the same reality. This helps us understand what Jesus means in 2:49.
  - a. 9:22.
  - b. 13:33.
  - c. 17:25.
  - d. 22:37.
  - e. 24:7.
  - f. 24:44.
4. The mission, then, is Jesus has His eyes set on the cross to fulfill OT Scripture.
  - iii. People may wonder when Jesus actually came to understand Who He truly was. We don’t know, but it was at least by the age of 12. He not only had a self-understanding of His divine identity, but a self-understanding of His divine mission.

## 7. Conclusion.

- a. The purpose of Christ coming into the world was to fulfill the historic mission of His Father and accomplish sin-forgiveness.
- b. Jesus is the seed and very fulfillment of Gen. 3:15.
- c. He’s come to bring a divine reversal.
- d. Our only response is to cast ourselves upon Him and His work—the only hope of forgiveness of victory.

### Small Group Question

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What was the two-fold purpose of Jesus' questions? In other words, what was He revealing in the questions?
3. The past few sermons I've asked you to identify people in your life with whom you can share the Gospel. Have you yet spoken to them? If so, how did it go? If not, why? What still needs to happen for you to do this?