

# The Childhood of Jesus

## Luke 2:21–52 (ESV)

**INTRODUCTION:** If this is your first time with us, our approach to scripture is fairly simple. We pick a book and simply walk through it verse by verse. We seek to:

1. Give the **Historical Context** the passage was written in.
2. Give the Context of the Passage within both the **larger book** of the Bible as well as the **Bible as whole**.
3. Draw out the **implications** of the passage for our personal context.

**This approach keeps us on track.**

1. I as the Preacher am kept from **hobby horses**. We've all heard men who seem to see the same sermon in every passage. A journey through a book of the Bible makes that very difficult.
2. It forces us to deal with the **difficult passages**. We can't avoid the hard stuff. We can't just preach those things which reaffirm our preconceived ideas. We must be true to the text.

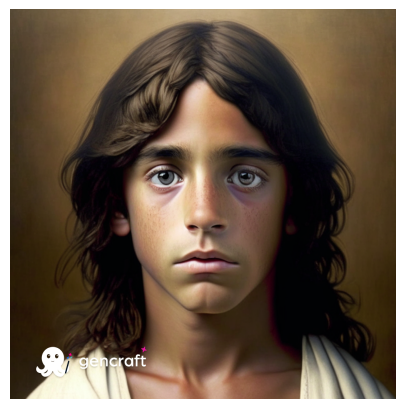
**When the WORD of God is rightly preached, the VOICE of God is rightly heard.**

Now sometimes this approach can be tricky. Early in my ministry I was so committed to this approach that I would not take a break from the study no matter the occasion.

- One Mother's Day we landed on the text about, "The Geresene Demoniac". I called it "When Mom is acting Strange". Kidding!

Well I couldn't have planned today's text any better. It is the Sunday after VBS and we have landed providentially in the portion of scripture that tells us about the **childhood of Jesus Christ**.

**Just for fun I asked an AI program , "what did Jesus look like as a child?" This is what it came up with:**



It had me curious so I asked it what did Pastor Dan look like as a child and here is what it came up with:



**CONTEXT:** We have already said much about the weight placed on the shoulders of Joseph and Mary as they were expected to raise up the Son of God, the Savior of the World. We aren't given a great deal of information about how exactly they did that.

There are some erroneous stories outside of scripture that relate to the childhood of Jesus, mostly found in the **Gospel of Thomas - which was written around 140AD**. They tell of Jesus bringing toy pigeons to life and sliding down from a roof on a sunbeam. We know they are spurious accounts because scripture tells us plainly that **the first miracle of Jesus was the one performed at the wedding at Cana**.

But the Holy Spirit did inspire Luke to pen a few accounts from the childhood of our Lord. The student of scripture must ask not only what did these accounts say, but **WHY THESE ACCOUNTS?**

John tells us in **John 21:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Typically - the length of an account would be expected to fit on a **single 35ft scroll**. As such, the human author had to make the difficult decisions as to what stories made the cut. This was, of course, guided by the Holy Spirit.

There were **FIVE stories from the childhood of Jesus** that made it into the book of Luke.

1. His circumcision
2. His presentation at the temple
3. The Encounter with Simeon
4. The Encounter with Anna
5. The Occassion when His parents left him behind in Jerusalem.

One must presume that there is a reason that these stories made it while others did not.

There are two interesting passages in the text of these accounts - found In **Luke 2:40 and 2:52**. They seem to be telling us why these stories were included.

Chapter 3 begins with the preaching of an adult John the Baptist and Jesus around 30 years of age. Let's look at the two verses...

**TEXT:**

**Luke 2:40 (ESV)** <sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

**Luke 2:52 (ESV)**

<sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

I believe that the 5 encounters Luke includes in the narrative are showing us what sort of things happened in the life of Jesus that caused him to increase in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

You see, while Jesus was 100% God Paul tells us in the book of Philippians...

**Philippians 2:6–7 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup>... though he (*Jesus*) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (*Held on to*) <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

While never ceasing to be GOD, Jesus didn't take full advantage of His divine prerogative. So we see that the works Jesus did, He did by the power of the Spirit, just as you and I must. That is why there are no miracles until after His baptism.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that

**Hebrews 2:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> ...he had to be made like his brothers in every respect"

So Jesus while being full God, became completely and totally human. ***The Creator of the Universe became an Embryo. The Ancient of Days was a Toddler. The Everlasting Father became a Pre-Teen.***

**Hebrews 5:8 (ESV)** reveals...<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he **learned** obedience through what he suffered.

So Jesus had to grow, Jesus had to increase in wisdom and stature and favor... just like your kids do. What did God use to make that happen?

**The text can be divided into three sections.** *The Work of Jesus's Parents, the Work of Jesus's Faith Community, The Work of Jesus Himself.*

Let's look first at...

## **1. The Work of Jesus's Parents**

Luke presents us with three snapshots from the parenting of Joseph and Mary. After chapter 2, we never read of Joseph again. We know that Joseph and Mary went on to have several other children. *They are mentioned in Matthew 12:46-50, 13:55-56; Mark 3:31, 6:3; Luke 8:19; John 2:12, 7:3; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5; and Paul speaks of a James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19).*

It is likely that Joseph died before Jesus earthly ministry began. So we don't know much about how they parented, but we do know of three things they did. Each occasion mentioned demonstrates the faith of Joseph and Mary. Keep that in mind, ***Jesus is a passive participant.***

### a. The Circumcision of Jesus -

#### Luke 2:21–52 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Circumcision was required of every male child of Israel. It was the sign that this child is a recipient of the covenant promise made to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. In and of itself - circumcision did not make a person righteous, later we are told that apart from personal faith circumcision was of no value. But Joseph and Mary had Jesus circumcised because they intended to raise him as a member of the covenant community of Israel.

### b. The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple

<sup>22</sup> And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

40 days after the birth of Jesus. The law required that a sacrifice be made on behalf of the mother's uncleanness. A few things this reveals.

1. Mary saw herself as unclean and in need of cleansing.
2. At this point the wise men had not arrived. The birds they offered in sacrifice were an accommodation for those who could not afford a lamb. Once the magi arrived with their gifts, the circumstances of Joseph and Mary would change.
3. This shows us that the Law of God was kept perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ, even as a child.

### c. The Annual Journey to Jerusalem

<sup>41</sup> Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

Passover was one of the three annual festivals Jewish men were required to celebrate in Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). The entire celebration lasted around 7 days.

Passover week commemorated God's Judgement passing over those families who by faith painted their doorpost and thresholds with the blood of the lamb. Here we see that Joseph took Mary and Jesus with him to celebrate passover in Jerusalem.

For each of these events - circumcision, the presentation at the temple, the annual trip to Jerusalem for passover, Jesus was a passive party. None of these revealed anything about Jesus at this point. It simply indicates the faith of his earthly mom and dad.

Hopefully, you had the benefit of Christian parents. Hopefully, you can remember or have evidence of things your parents did to indicate their hope that you would grow wisdom and favor with God and man.

Perhaps you were christened as a child. Perhaps you were dedicated to the Lord. Perhaps you were taken to church at an early age. Perhaps you were involved in things like VBS, Student ministry, Mission trips, Youth Camp.

All of those things help to shape and form the soul of a young man or young lady. But we must remember, that those things are only modes of instruction, they are only evidence of a parents faith. The child is a passive participant.

It has been said, "God has no grandchildren, only children". The faith of our parents and grandparents may give us a distinct advantage, but they cannot repent and believe for us.

Parents, the fact that you are here today, that many of you faithfully get your kids involved in as many Godly activities as you can - is to be commended. God uses such things to shape your sons and daughters.

*Not only the work of Jesus's Parents...*

## **2. The Work of Jesus's Faith Community**

Two individuals are mentioned in Luke's account. Both Senior Adults. One named Simeon and the other named Anna.

### **a. The Song of Simeon**

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Simeon held no office, no title, he was just faithful found in the house of the Lord. Like many in this congregation he was a fixture in the Temple. Everyone knew - rain or shine, Simeon was going to be there.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I remember early in my ministry I didn't get much off time. So I was always excited if it snowed because I thought, maybe the Deacons would let me sleep late that Sunday. But there were a few Simeons. They wanted to have church.

They would say preacher - it may just be me and you... but the Bible says wherever two or more are gathered He would be in the midst of them.

Well, after 25 years of ministry, I've become a Simeon myself. Some of these younger guys will ask if we can cancel church for this or that. I'm like, nah... the Bible says wherever two or more are gathered He would be in the midst of them.

*Well God had told Simeon something...*

<sup>26</sup> And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple,

Incidentally, there are two ways to come to church, in the Spirit or in the Flesh. If you come in Spirit the sermon is always better.

<sup>27</sup> And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

What a precious gift God gave this senior saint. He would live long enough to lay eyes on his Savior and Lord before his home going.

<sup>33</sup> And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed <sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

*The next person they Encountered was a Prophetess named Anna*

### **b. The Prophecy of Anna**

<sup>36</sup> And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, <sup>37</sup> and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup> And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Before John the Baptist would point to Jesus and say, "behold the Lamb of God", there was Anna. Imagine the scene, thousands gathered for passover... this senior adult lady breaking out in praise and pointing to a baby, saying, "Israel behold your Savior".

Now, I point this out to you because I want you to see how God works. Two of the most significant things ever spoken over the life of Jesus, neither of which came from his parents.

We Americans tend to go it alone. We tend to believe that we are capable to give our children anything they might possibly need in life. But Mary and Joseph didn't see it that way. They got Jesus around the larger community of faith.

One of the greatest decisions that Julie and I made as parents has been to raise our kids in a multi-generational church.

- My kids went to church with men like **Ken Sinyard** who was one of the engineers who designed the Saturn 5 Rocket. He could tell them how they did the calculations for the moon launch on yellow legal pads.
- They were able to be around people like **Frank and Diane Cammaroti**, who took the Gospel to Romania.
- They have been around men like **Willie Watson** who served his country in WW2.
- They have worshipped together with a US Congressman in **Aaron Bean**.

**Folks, there isn't a program in American that can expose your kids to the kind of people they will meet just by hanging around a place like this.**

*The third movement of the text focuses on a 12 year old Jesus beginning to personally engage in serving His Heavenly Father.*

### **3. The Work of Jesus Himself**

<sup>41</sup> Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup> And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. <sup>43</sup> And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, <sup>44</sup> but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, <sup>45</sup> and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I remember when Carly was maybe around 3 years of age, we had a moment like this. We were in a toy store in the mall in Decatur, AL. My parents thought we had Carly, we thought they had Carly... but suddenly Carly was gone. We all panicked and started going store to store.. eventually finding her in a Jewelry store looking at diamonds. We thanked God and said a prayer for her future husband.

<sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

The teachers would have likely been the Jewish Sanhedrin, a sort of court of appeals for Israel. Remember many would come to Jerusalem during these holy days and seek to learn. One of the ways the Jews showed hospitality was to give an opportunity for seekers to ask questions.

<sup>47</sup> And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

12 year old Jesus of Nazareth, a 7th grader, a middle schooler.. amazing the teachers of the law with his comprehension. It is likely that some of those same men 20 years later would cast a vote for his crucifixion. One wonders if they remembered this day.

48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that **I must** be in my Father's house?"

50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. 51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

### **CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

**Jesus at this point is Self Conscious - He understands who He is and what He must be about. Parents, there are these moments in the life of a son or daughter when they say, "I MUST".**

I remember when God was calling me into ministry at the age of 19, uncertain of how it would go, uncertain of what my parents would think... but there came a point when none of that mattered... I must do this.

That is one of the reasons we don't drag out invitations, we work hard not to manipulate the emotions of a child. We believe that if God is truly working in your heart, there is not a person on earth who can stop you from responding.

Jesus said, "I must be about my Father's business".

**What is it that you MUST do?**

**What is it that your son or daughter MUST do?**