



Lesson 6 July 11th, 2020

The Boy Jesus

Study Scripture – Ecclesiastes 3:1-15; Luke 2:39-52

Background Scripture – Ecclesiastes 1 & Luke 2

Key Verse:

“And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the Grace of God was upon Him.”

Luke 2:40

INTRODUCTION

ECCLESIASTES 3

The book of Ecclesiastes is one of the most peculiar books in the Bible. Every generation has found it fascinating, because more than any other Book it takes an extremely realistic look at the confusion and desperation in the lives of men. It pulls the veil that covers all the eyes of all men and therefore looks at reality.

In our Study today we will see what reality is and how God displays reality to men. Reality therefore can only be seen as we look at the Boy Jesus for He made all things and all things are made for Him and wrapped up in Him.

When the writer asks the fundamental question, Where can I find meaning? he emphasized the seeming circularity in life on the Earth.

The Book philosophically examines secular wisdom and knowledge, limiting itself to what is apparent to the natural mind. It therefore looks at human life, constantly repeating its key phrase **“under the sun”**, for that is what it is observing, analyzing, discussing personal experiences and reviewing them in the light of human wisdom.

The “Table of Ecclesiastes” then collects what man has been able to learn **“under the sun”**, that is, the visible world.

As is to be expected therefore, since the Book does not consider to any great extent the revelation that comes from any source beyond man's power of observation and reason, it certainly will tell us what ancient and modern people actually believe and how they think about the same subjects and experiences that we see today in soap operas as well as in every kind of political movement and philosophy. This Book therefore is guaranteed to fascinate us, since it reflects what human beings actively concern themselves with, and what they believe deep

down in their souls. It will hopefully as intended lead us to Christ as the way to avoid the circularity and meaninglessness of life as it is ***under the sun***.

It is therefore no surprise then that the main statement, what we would call the thesis statement is ***Vanity of vanities, all is vanity***".

This search for meaning takes us around in circles and is therefore a vain search. It begins with meaninglessness and ends with meaninglessness.

We begin by looking at the first verse in chapter 3 in this Book, so that it will be beneficial when we discern how this meaninglessness in the lives of men has been overcome, and we learn that that life can take on meaning and the itching for something more than what we see or the gnawing inside us can come to an end. We will discover from this Study, unlike the words of a popular song by singers that are clearly depressed that "***this is not all there is***".

At the end, the author gives us some direction so that we can come out of this frustrating search of life, move beyond the confines of our dying self, and find an eternal relationship that takes us in a straight line toward ultimate meaning.

Note carefully however that this Book deals with secular wisdom and examines and assembles the philosophies by which men live. It therefore would seem quite obvious, attractive, and real to us. But the author has initiated a search before and before he puts his own conclusion at the very start of the Book, he tells us in a very depressing tone:

What profit has the worker from that in which he labours?

I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end".

But since the Book of Ecclesiastes is inspired by the Holy Spirit and it tells us that nothing in itself is satisfying, no relationship, no pleasure, nothing, absolutely nothing in this world has enduring value, and there is nothing that will work, we will now have to look at the further revelation of the Holy Spirit to balance things out. But we note that one writer describes the meaning of the theme word used in the original as "***emptiness, futility, meaninglessness, blabness***".

Because the writer looks at all kinds of philosophies and different views about life, and tried to experiment with these looking for satisfaction, he made all kinds of different statements. It is therefore understandable why this is one of the favourite books of the Bible for sceptics, atheists, scoffers, and members of some cults. They feed on some passages in the Book which for example, seems to deny that there is life after death and that when this life ends it is all over. The atheists therefore frequently quote from this Book. The people who live for pleasure, we call them hedonists, also frequently use quotations from this book, holding that it supports their eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we must die pleasure seeking lifestyle.



Then some quite falsely use it as support for the teaching, that even if we survive beyond this life, we enter a period of quietness where we have no knowledge or desires. In all of these cases, people pull all the quotations they use completely out of context. They fail to note that the Book examines secular wisdom and limits itself from the start to what the natural mind sees, constantly repeating the words *under the sun*.

It is only when we place the book of Ecclesiastes in its Proper context that we will understand it. Genesis tells us the words of God to Adam which pivots mankind into its present state:

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”.

God had told the father of our race that because of his sin in the Garden of Eden there were consequences, and that his sin had introduced a sense of futility and meaninglessness into his work and his entire life. All his descendants would experience the same thing, and man’s work would be painted by sorrow, and everything that he achieves would come to nothing. So let us examine carefully this writer’s summary as he notes:

“the mind-numbing circularity of the statement, “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return”. It is just this futility in work, this meaninglessness in human life, that underlies the question introducing the poem of Ecclesiastes 3 to 11.

Solomon observes the many circles within our world that illustrate the vanity of life under the sun. There is the generational cycle, one coming and the one going, and the Earth remains unchanged. There is the solar cycle, which is maddening in its changelessness. There is the weather cycle, the wind blowing on its “circular courses”. He even contemplates the water cycle, from the ocean to the clouds via evaporation, back to the ground via precipitation, back to the ocean via the rivers. All things seem to be caught in wearisome circles that fail to satisfy the observing eye or the listening ear. Then he explores the circle of time: *That which has been is that which will be...*” concluding with the oft quoted phrase *“There is nothing new under the sun”.*

He is not talking about technology or the material things of life here, but about human life and experience itself, which is never new.

The poem ends with the darker reflection that there are endless time cycles binding humanity to a treadmill of repetitive history, because there is no remembrance. The more we contemplate these endless and changeless circles, the more all does seem meaningless”.

Another writer compliments this view:

“The paradigm for human life in Ecclesiastes is the mind-numbing circle. It is God’s curious answer to the man in the garden, an answer that encircles the natural world and human life within an unbreakable ring. The universe is bound within changeless circularity, and human life is defined by this dust- to- dust treadmill. This mind-numbing circle paradigm is both very realistic, accounting for the circularity in the universe and in human experience, and very



hopeful, because Solomon discovers that this treadmill was redemptively designed by God to compel us to look beyond the circle for meaning in relationship with him”.

Now we should note what this means very carefully.

This Book makes every believer sensitive to the condition of the people of the world, for these people know nothing about the “good news” that God has broken the meaningless cycle of the materialistic and spiritually dead world through Jesus Christ.

They are lost, hurting, confused, frustrated, despairing, unbroken, because for them there is no escape from this futile existence in a darkened world, and they are convinced that this is all there is to life.

Our task therefore is to take the message to the world that God is still present in His creation, and is Sovereign, and fully intending to bring about a different kind of life, than that which exists *under the sun*.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. For everything under heaven there is an appointed life. There are set boundaries in the realm of the Earth and in our life. There is an appropriate and a beautiful time for everything and there is a purpose for everything that happens. Just as there is an appointed cycle in all of nature, and these follow the fixed purpose of God, though the world seems to be constantly changing we must know that we ourselves have very little personal input in the continuous events or occurrences in human life that seem to be happening without specific direction. We cannot change what is appointed. God has made according to verse 11 “*everything appropriate in its time*”.

Nothing can be taken out of its sequence. One writer states:

“God by his providence governs the world and has determined particular things and operations to particular times. In those times such things may be done with propriety and success, but if we neglect the appointed seasons, we sin against this providence, and become the authors of our own distresses.

God has given to man that portion of duration called Time, the space in which all the operations of nature, of animals, and intellectual beings, are carried on; but while nature is already in its course, animals faithful to their instincts, man devotes it to a great variety of purposes; but very frequently to that for which God never made time, space, or opportunity. And all we can say, when an evil deed is done, is, there was a time in which it was done, though God never made it for that purpose.

Note that we have been told that change is a way of life and the things of life vary constantly, with different events occurring steadily sometimes without any warning or prior indication that such a thing would never happen. Sometimes things go from one extreme to the other. But in fact all of life’s activities are covered and God works through the established order, determining everything that happens as He wills.



Cycles exist in the affairs of men and though some think that they can be avoided it is impossible. Sometimes we even see leaders, whether political or religious, convince people that he or she can overcome the vagaries of life. This is a lie and quite impossible. Sometimes some become fatalists, standing and accepting with a bowed head that it is impossible to do anything significant. Others try to anticipate the future and create advantages for themselves. But if we accept Solomon's affirmations, the logical conclusion is that we are not in control of the circumstances that determine our own life path.

What we need to focus on now as we read, is to learn not to necessarily depend on certain skills to change our circumstances, for Solomon says that this is foolishness. Instead we should try to find the required way to succeed despite the changes and cycles, so that we will grow spiritually and be strengthened emotionally.

Wisdom teaches Believers therefore, those that are in Christ, that they should not live lives of despair and meaninglessness. They are like Solomon advises to live a life of joy. They are led by the Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 7. **Wisdom** therefore teaches you that there is a time to tear the garment, as in mourning in a time of great grief, and there will be a time to restore the garment to wholeness. There is a time to undo what we have done.

Wisdom tells us that when it is an evil time, when it would be a time of casting pearls before swine, when the calamity is so severe, in such dangerous times we wisely must keep silent. There will be a time when wisdom and obligations say we are to be quiet, for if one speaks, it will be the same as speaking wrongly. There are times when we should not pass on what we know, repeat gossip, or keep a secret. Then there would be times when we ought to speak out and stand for the truth. At other times we will speak to bring glory to God, when confession must be made for salvation purposes, to educate and warn others, and when keeping a secret would keep someone bound,

So sometimes in life we see actions that are wicked and of which we disapprove, and the appropriate course is to separate oneself from those people and thereby express hatred for what they are doing. But of course there will be times when we ought to speak up and stand for the truth.

Remember that God has made everything beautiful and appropriate in its time. Remember also that God has a Wonderful Plan for Your Life.

LUKE 2

There are many different images of Jesus in people's minds, but the Scriptures forcefully assert both the humanity and the deity of our Lord and our Study Text reinforces these facts. Some see Jesus in the Christmas image of a baby in a manger; others think of Him as a good man who taught many valuable lessons in morality; still others see Him mainly as a kind of superhuman; a



godlike figure, who has a startlingly otherworldly, brilliant and shining appearance and who wields tremendous power.

But two thousand years ago a little baby was born. He came in due time, the time appointed. He was God's Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The announcement was made to a few select persons and then we see the unfolding revelation of who this baby was and what this life was going to be like. He was not born among the aristocracy and elite at this time. He was born from parents who were certainly not wealthy or powerful. But they were godly, committed to God and His Law and Commandments. There was no better place in which the Son of God to be born. This was the best house for him to grow up in.

It is a difficult concept to grasp but we should understand that Jesus was fully human. His conception was supernatural, but the fetus developed normally in His mother's womb, was fed through the umbilical cord and at the appointed normal time He came down the birth canal and was delivered just like any other baby. Jesus then went through childhood and developed physically, intellectually and spiritually.

Of course we know that He was without sin and at every stage of His development He always did what was right and appropriate for a child. During this process He broke none of the Commandments of God and none of His actions violated the principles of righteousness and holiness.

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus emptied Himself and took on Himself the form of a slave. This passage should not be interpreted that He ceased to be God, for the words used does not support that heretical position. We are told however that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit more than any other man and that He lived and then carried out His ministry totally under the control of the Holy Spirit.

For sure, there is some mystery involved in Jesus' dual nature and the idea of His growth. However it is difficult to maintain the position that Jesus was not always aware of who He was, at a level commensurate with His human development. His development would of necessity be much more rapid than the development of a normal or even a genius child. Since the Holy Spirit was directly involved and filled the Child from conception, this filling would involve the exchange of information at a level at which we can hardly understand. The Gospel of Luke shows clear emphasis that Jesus, "the Son of man", (note that this is a powerful messianic title) is definitely a man and His essential manhood is constantly displayed.

The Apostle John makes it clear that Jesus was the "Word of God" and that He existed from before the beginning, that He was God, that He created all things, seen and unseen and that He came to earth and His disciples were able to touch Him, feel Him and interact with Him in every way.



So clearly Luke is introducing Theophilus and us to the perfect man and that by looking at how He behaves, we will learn many valuable lessons. We should be reminded that the first readers of this gospel lived in an age when mythology had popularized the idea that the gods often visited humans. But in those visits the gods did not become human and remained different from human beings. There is a major difference in the teaching in Luke's Gospel. He makes it clear that Jesus was God and provides convincing evidence to make people believe that Jesus became a real man at His incarnation. Any teaching or teacher which deviates from the revealed facts of His nature, that Jesus came in the 'flesh', belongs to the 'Antichrist', according to the Apostle John.

While Jesus was fully human, He was also fully God. Our Lord had two natures, His deity and His humanity and none should be emphasized at the expense of the other. We should be mindful of this fact in considering the Text. Jesus acted the way He did and could do and say what no other young child could have done and been right in doing so because of who He was.

Jesus' wisdom and development as a child, physically, intellectually and spiritually was such that His parents, despite the revelations that they had been given about Him previously, seemed unable to grasp the full implications of His person. They seemed unable to understand what it meant to be the "*Son of God*", the Messiah, that "*Holy Thing*". It was very difficult even for the disciples and the other followers of Jesus who lived with Him, heard Him speak and teach and saw Him perform miracles. If we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we also, despite all the evidence that we have and the possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit, do not find it easy to grasp Jesus in His fullness. In any case God cannot be fully known by human beings.

The fact is, Jesus is God, He is Sovereign and there is an unbreakable relationship between deity and sovereignty, and between sovereignty and authority. His authority as God was infinitely over that of His parents Mary and Joseph, but at the same time He showed in His wisdom that He was willing to accommodate Himself to the parental authority of those in whose temporary custody God the Father had placed Him.

Many parents wish that their children would be great, some even expect their children to be great, but a lot fewer expect this to happen while their children are still children. Also, many parents have had the unfortunate experience of their children going missing even for a span of minutes in a mall or at an exhibition or concert and the horror of such an experience can even be felt by those who only hear the story. These two thoughts highlight what the earthly parents of Jesus faced on one of their visits to Jerusalem to attend the Passover Feast, as Luke records the only event in Scriptures from the boyhood of Jesus, known as the hidden years. The whole episode however is more than a human story and is of critical importance as it goes straight to the heart of discussing the nature of Jesus, the God-Man.



We can understand why the parents of Jesus worried and feared needlessly for His safety. All the saints of God, including great men like Abraham, Job, Elijah, at times failed to understand who God really is and the implications of His virtues or attributes.

Luke's primary objective in his record is to show that God is uniquely Jesus' Father and he contrasts the wisdom and authority of Jesus with that of his parents. An accompanying contrast is made between Jesus' earthly parents and His heavenly Father.

While there are many fanciful tales in apocryphal writings about the childhood of Jesus, this is the only inspired account from that period and Luke must have considered it important for inclusion in his Gospel. Matthew records the incident of the Magi and the attempt of Herod to kill the baby Jesus, and the flight to Egypt, this being the only other incident from the growing up years of Jesus.

It is in this Text we find the first recorded words of Jesus and they are very important in terms of what they teach about the person of Jesus, His relationship to the Father, the priority of relationships and serve as an example for right Christian attitude. The Text also provides some insight to the life and spiritual development of Jesus' earthly parents.

VERSE 39-41. As we begin to read this Text, we should bear in mind that the entire story in the Bible is centered on one person.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises and purposes. It is about Him. Through His death and resurrection and His Second Coming God will act decisively.

We too will be called on to make a decision, for since Jesus is the One through whom God the Father is working out His purposes and His promises, rescuing the world from the destructive forces in it and from our sinfulness, we must decide about Him. As one writer states,

“We don't have the luxury of saying, “I don't know, and I don't care”.

We have previously looked in this Chapter 2 at a model of parenting from the lives of Mary and Joseph. Jesus was now only 40 days old and as the Law required Jesus was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem with His godly parents for every firstborn male had to be taken to the Temple and a sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons had to be offered. This was done and we read of the magnificent reception and prophetic blessings that He received at the Temple on that occasion. The requirement of the Law was kept.



Luke reports that the parents of Jesus always went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. This was the most holy and high feast of the three major feasts that all males were supposed to attend in Jerusalem. Clearly, Joseph and Mary were extremely devout and committed followers of God and they had clearly given their lives to the Lord and wanted to obey Him and so they every year undertook the long and dangerous journey to worship God and fulfill the requirements of the law. This Law commemorated God's grace in delivering the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

This was a trip traveling either on foot or with donkeys and it would take about 3 to 4 days. They lived in Nazareth and so they would go east across the Jordan, go to the east side of the Jordan River and then go west back to the city of Jerusalem to avoid traveling through Samaria and avoiding the prejudice and divisions between Samaritans and Jews. Remember that the trip of Joseph and Mary with Jesus would be a dangerous one. That is why Jesus in the Parable of the Good Samaritan told about robbers attacking a certain man who journeyed to Jerusalem. That journey would take place through the kind of territory where robbers would attack travelers along the way. To be safe Jews going to the Feasts in Jerusalem would travel in large caravans.

Jesus was now 12 years old one year away from His 13th birthday, the time when He would pass into adulthood. One writer tells us that **“the year between age 12 to an age 13 was one of intense study in preparation for assuming the responsibilities of a Jewish male before God, Jesus would be learning the law, somewhat like learning catechism in our time”**.

There is no wonder therefore that the Child Jesus grew physically and became strong. He increased in wisdom because the grace of God was upon Him.

It is amazing to know that during the centuries hundreds of stories have emerged about the boyhood of Jesus even though the Bible is completely silent on any of that. One writer tells us **“If we are to believe some of the legends, however, we would have to say that Jesus had a lot of fun as a boy. One legend says that lions and leopards worshipped him. Another says that when Jesus was an infant, he said to a palm tree, “Bend down and refresh my mother with your fruit”, and the Palm tree obeyed. Another story says that when Jesus was five years old, he molded twelve sparrows from clay, then he clapped his hands and the sparrows flew away. The stories will continue to be told as long as people think that Jesus knew from his infancy exactly who he was and the power that was available to him in his deity. They think he was “grown up” from the time he was born, in other words. But verse 40 does not say that.**

Our Lord Jesus was born as a baby, incarnated, God in the flesh. He experienced the full spectrum of his humanity, yet without sin. The apostle Paul said it clearly in Philippians 2:6-8: “Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he committed himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross”.



Jesus went through a process of increasing in wisdom. Jesus was raised by godly parents according to the law of Moses. Early in his life, he learned the joy of studying the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms. Proverbs encouraged him to seek godly wisdom, not that which the world relies upon. Webster says, “Wisdom is the quality of being wise: the power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action based on knowledge, experience and understanding”. That definition defines wisdom out of our own resources”

We note therefore that the Holy Spirit worked with Jesus. Jesus was taught the word of God. His parents had helped Him develop in the area of godly wisdom so He could live a life pleasing to His heavenly Father though He was living in a fallen world. Jesus went through the process of day-to-day developing Godly wisdom as He grew.

We know that He also grew spiritually for the Lord God was pleased with His son so that at Jesus’ baptism He would say, ***“This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased”***.

Luke tells us that the family stayed in Jerusalem for the entire week of Passover, so we know that they fully obeyed the law and at the end of Passover Feast they headed back home. Now the problem started. Jesus’ parents would have left in these large caravans for safety where children would be mixed in with those from other families for, they were generally all the relatives and friends and neighbours from the small villages.

The 12-year-old Jesus was discovered missing and His parents had to make their way back to Jerusalem. A fruitless search had ensued within their caravan but no Jesus. Joseph and Mary then headed back to Jerusalem where three days after missing Him, Jesus is ‘found’ in the Temple among the great sages of Israel, asking and answering questions. All who heard Him were astounded at His grasp and insight into the Scriptures. In the face of His mother’s consternation and mild rebuke, Jesus gave the startling response, ***“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”***

Many questions arise from the Text; did Jesus act irresponsibly towards His parents? While the Scriptures are emphatic that Jesus was without sin, how was it that His behaviour, which was regarded as wrong by His parents, was not wrong? Why can Jesus’ actions not be wrong for Him, when they would have been wrong for any other Jewish or Gentile boy for that matter? What was Jesus’ purpose in deliberately remaining in Jerusalem? Pointedly, Jesus was not where His parents expected Him to be, but He was where He was supposed to be!

Let us carefully consider the Text for answers to these important questions.

Clearly Jesus felt a compulsion to see about *His Father’s business*. He had a sense of purpose and calling which He exhibited even as young as the age of twelve. Our study of the Text should excite a similar desire in our hearts to be about our heavenly Father's business.



Verse 41. Joseph and Mary showed themselves to be law abiding Jews in their attendance at the feast of Passover, for they obeyed the command that all Jewish males were required to appear before God three times each year; at Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles.

(Ex.23:14-17; Deut. 16:16). By the time of the first century Jews were scattered all over the Roman Empire and it was literally impossible for all Jews to attend the three Feast but many endeavoured to attend at least one of the required feasts.

It was a difficult journey even for those who lived in Palestine, but Joseph and Mary attended each year and it was likely a sacrifice for them as they were poor folk. While women did not have to attend the feasts, we note that Mary accompanied her husband every year. (See 1 Sam. 1:7 for this type of behaviour by another woman of God).

Verse 42-43. Commentators differ on whether it is at twelve or thirteen years that a Jewish boy becomes a “son of the law”. Many hold that at twelve years children began to learn to fast so they would be able to fast on the Day of Atonement. Then at thirteen years old a child became *a son of the commandment*, that is, obliged to the duties of adult synagogue membership.

Jewish boys were of course *sons of the covenant* by virtue of their circumcision. At thirteen years through some formal rite they become full participants in synagogue life and begin to undergo particular instruction and training, as well as begin to learn a trade.

It was an important age and would be helpful for a boy to experience Passover in preparation for his official entry into Jewish life the following year and Jesus’ parents were helpful in this regard.

One commentator notes that Luke here called Jesus a “boy” (Greek *pais*, a word also used of servants) rather than a “child” (Greek *paidion*), used in verse 40. So at this stage Jesus was probably considered to be a “son of the covenant”.

It should be noted that the bar mitzvah of modern times is dated about five hundred years after the time of Jesus. The customs of the time of Jesus were probably somewhat different and so it is very likely that Jesus was now considered to be a responsible person and His parents expected Him to behave accordingly, and in line with their definition of responsible behaviour. He would be therefore somewhat free to be with the other adults and children in the caravan of the pilgrims, rather than staying around with His parents.

Except for the statement in Luke 2:40 nothing is known of Jesus' life from the time He was one month old to the time when He was twelve and this is all the Holy Spirit would have us know of this period of His life. Note the context of this particular location. It certainly would have had a great effect on Jesus. Its significance would be certainly clear to Jesus at this stage of His intellectual development. He would have known the Law, the Exodus, and the history of Israel very well.



Passover lasted eight days, one day for killing the paschal lamb and seven days for the observance of the feast of unleavened bread, (Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 23:5-6). It was a time of celebration, as it marked the nation's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Joseph and Mary appeared to have spent the full eight days in Jerusalem, though it was not absolutely necessary that they stay past the first two days.

The Passover Feast was an impressive spectacle as the blood from the lambs was passed hand to hand in golden and silver bowls along two lines of priests, to be finally dashed against the altar. Meanwhile, large crowds of pilgrims gathered in the outer courts of the Temple sang the Hallel Psalms (Psalm 113-118). The boy Jesus might have been a participant in this ceremony that pointed to Him and the greater deliverance that He would accomplish through His own death. He would have sang about *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes"*.

At the end of the feast Joseph and Mary headed back to Nazareth but Jesus remained in Jerusalem. The decision to remain in Jerusalem was solely His, which He later explained as *being about His Father's business*. Luke makes the point that *"the child Jesus tarried*. So Jesus was not awestruck with the sights of Jerusalem nor was there any attraction that persuaded Him to remain. He had no problem with His parents' company or any with life in Nazareth for that matter.

None-the-less neither of His parents was as yet aware of this "seeming" indiscretion. Interestingly this is the last direct mention we have of Joseph in Luke's Gospel.

Verse 44-45. Those who travelled to Jerusalem for the Feasts would often travel together in caravans. Thus, family, friends and other acquaintances from Nazareth and the surrounding areas seem to have formed such a caravan. The Feast having concluded, the caravan began the journey home and among them was Mary and Joseph but not Jesus.

Joseph and Mary were accustomed to the discretion and obedience of Jesus and were about to be thrown off their guard. Jesus was not discovered to be missing immediately but at some point after a day's travel, probably when the caravan halted for the night He was missed.

Several reasons have been put forward as to why the parents would not have missed Jesus. First, He was an absolutely trustworthy and reliable child and so His parents might not have been as concerned with His whereabouts, as they might have been with other children. Joseph and Mary assumed wrongly that He was somewhere in the caravan in the company of family, friends or other relatives.

Jesus had probably made this journey with His parents before and they expected a certain behaviour. People then lived somewhat clannish and His being with other clan members would have been quite acceptable. Also it was customary for the women and small children to start first and the men follow later; the older children would travel with either parent. If this was the



case Mary might have expected Jesus to be with Joseph, while Joseph thought He was with His mother.

In any case after a futile search of the caravan Joseph and Mary headed back to Jerusalem in search of their child. One commentator notes in part by way of application:

Those that would find Christ must *seek till they find*; for he will at length be found of those that seek him and will be found their bountiful rewarder. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how, they lost them, and must *turn back again* to the place where they last had them; must *remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, and return to their first love*, Revelation 2:4,5 ...

Verse 46-47. Three days after discovering Jesus missing, His parents find Him in the Temple in Jerusalem. Some interpret the '*after three days*' to mean after a three-day search in Jerusalem. Either way there would have been growing concern and anxiety on the part of His parents as the hours stretched into each other and still no sign of their boy.

A search of the Temple precincts appears almost as a last resort and surprise; He is found in the Temple grounds in one of the porticos where the rabbis taught; not in the sanctuary to which only the priests had access.

A bigger surprise awaited Joseph and Mary. They find Jesus sitting among the great sages and teachers of Israel, hearing, answering and asking questions. Note that the 'hearing' is placed first, indicating that He was there as a learner and it was in that capacity that He asked questions. Jerusalem was the centre of Jewish learning and teaching and the eminent rabbis of the day would gather after the Feasts to teach and answer questions.

The method of question and answer was the customary form of rabbinical teaching. They would be asked questions and they in turn would ask questions to challenge their students to deeper consideration of the issues being discussed. At the opportune time Jesus would respectfully pose a question and have questions asked of Him. His questions and answers were of such profundity that all who heard Him were staggered at His understanding and wisdom regarding the Scriptures.

This was an impressive intellectual performance by Jesus. These Jewish rabbis were known for their impressive intellect and power of analysis. One writer looks at it this way:

"This is sort of like a junior high school kid discussing physics with Einstein. Although, Jesus had a unique advantage, He had a special relationship with the writer of God's Word."



It is not to be imagined that Jesus in any way sought to embarrass or show-up the teachers. His role was principally that of a learner and a listener and at some point, someone must have asked: 'how old are you boy'?

There is no getting away from the fact that Jesus was asking these rabbis questions, probing them and forcing them to clarify their analysis. It might very well have been that when they questioned Him, He was giving them some insights that they had not previously had. Jesus had been with these people for several days and so His exposure to them and His questioning of them was clearly quite extensive and prolonged.

It is not an outrageous idea that these rabbis accepted Jesus as a child prodigy and showed Him tremendous and exceptional respect. Since Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit it is very possible that He outshone these rabbis.

Verse 48. This was the scene that greeted Joseph and Mary and one can only imagine the emotional mix of concern, anxiety, relief, and maybe even anger, to find Jesus sitting among the rabbis discussing theology and seemingly aloof to all the distress He has caused. Mary's reaction, out of what appears to be frustration and anger is understandable as she scolds Him and even if gently; her words are intended as a rebuke.

Mary's maternal and parental instincts seems to have for the moment overshadowed all of the wonderful things she had seen and had been told about her son, the things she "*treasured in her heart*", as here she treated Him as she would have any other child. With a sense of disbelief she in effect asked, "How could you have done this to your father and myself"?

"...thy father and I..." Joseph was not Jesus' real father but he was legally so, and it was this relationship that gave Jesus the right to the throne of David. The facts of Jesus birth were not commonly known and though there were certain 'rumours' circulating, Joseph was seen as His father and it might be in this sense that Mary used the term father of Joseph.

"...sought thee sorrowing..." Mary and Joseph likely imagined all the tragic scenarios that could have befallen their son and blamed themselves for not being more protective of Him. This would have put them under severe stress and the last three days must have taken quite an emotional toll on them and helps explain Mary's rebuke of Jesus.

It is perhaps easy for us to say that Joseph and Mary should have made no mistakes in dealing with their son Jesus, but we should realize that to be responsible for the son of God, nurturing Him, watching over Him, caring for Him, was certainly no easy matter. That kind of task is unimaginably difficult and could only be done because the parents were people of God, dedicated to God and willing to learn from God.



Clearly, both Mary and Joseph would have struggled to put together all the pieces to determine precisely the nature of our Lord, His humanity, and His Deity. We know from subsequent Scripture that Mary was so filled with thoughts about the humanity of Jesus and caring as a mother that she forgot that He was deity, and that was what would determine how He acted toward persons in His family and others.

Verse 49. Jesus response was certainly unexpected. One would have anticipated some sort of hesitant apology to Mary's remarks in light of His seemingly less than thoughtful behaviour. Jesus' response however is nothing of an apology for His behaviour; rather it appears to be a mixture of surprise and a little indignation. Jesus asked a question which shifted the focus and the rebuke from what they considered to be His error, to what was in fact Mary's and Joseph's error.

'Why would you have had to look for Me?' was Jesus' question. 'Shouldn't you have known where I would be?' In Jesus' mind they had grounds to know and should have known that the Son of God was safe; that His heavenly Father would take care of Him and that He would do nothing improper. Just in the event it had slipped their minds as to who He was, Jesus said *"...I must be about my Father's business."* Point being, God was His real Father as opposed to Mary's statement about Joseph and secondly His Father's business took precedence over all else. He had a Father in heaven to whom He must first be obedient and respect to His Heavenly Father should not be construed as disrespect to them. In fact, Jesus was where He was expected to be; that is in 'His Father's house' as some translations have it and naturally doing His Father's business. After all He was at the age where Jewish boys began to learn a trade and often that of their father.

Verse 50-51. Going by Luke's record this was the end of the incident, because neither Mary nor Joseph really understood what had transpired or what Jesus actually meant by His questions. The fact that Jesus was the Messiah and Saviour of all men seemed lost on His parents, or they understood it in a very imperfect manner.

It sounds like without another word being said about the matter, Jesus voluntarily went with Joseph and Mary back to Nazareth, to live with them and in submission to their authority. The knowledge of who He was did not make Jesus proud or arrogant. He acted and lived the life of a faithful and obedient child and was likely engaged in the trade of Joseph as a carpenter. (See Phil.2:5-8).

Note that obedience to parents is a duty and Jesus has set us an example. He was the Son of God, but also the *son* of Mary and He loved and obeyed His mother and was subject to her. In drawing conclusions from the Text it is important to distinguish between those things which are unique to Jesus as God Incarnate (the Godman) and those things in which He is an example to all.

For instance, only the Child Jesus who was both God and man, could rightly act contrary to the permission and preferences of His parents, as He did by remaining in Jerusalem after His



parents had left for Nazareth. This incident is clearly not an example for other children, and this is seen in Jesus total submission to His parents after this incident in the Temple and the fact it is stated immediately after Jesus went against what would have been His parents' wishes.

...*Went down with them*...Jerusalem is situated in a high mountainous region thus they went down.

Once again Mary and Joseph were puzzled at the whole aura surrounding Jesus. Joseph's silence was typical, and we are told that Mary as was now her habit, *kept all these sayings in her heart*. If their recall of the mysterious events surrounding the birth of Jesus had by now become distant, then this incident would once again bring them vividly back to mind.

Mary's behaviour is exemplary, and Christians should not dismiss Scriptures or the works of God they do not understand but rather they should keep and meditate on such things until the Holy Spirit brings light to the matter.

Verse 52. *And Jesus increased*...similar to what is expressed in verse 40. Jesus at no time ceased to be God so what is expressed here refers to His humanity. Jesus was fully God and fully man and so experienced the normal growth that is the experience of all humans. The difference is that at every stage of His growth He realized full potential unlike all other humans who are tainted by sin and who never reach their full potential at any stage of their lives.

Jesus was all that a man could be at every stage of His development. He grew physically, spiritually, mentally and socially. The unparalleled grace of God was manifest in His life and thus He had favour with man and God.

It is pointed out that the Greek "increased" or "grew" (v. 52 *prokopto*) literally means to make one's way forward by chopping down obstacles, a vivid description of the maturation process.

Understandably, in the perfections of His divine nature there could be no growth, for all the attributes of God are at all times infinite in their proportions and God is immutable.

Considering Jesus' two natures one commentator observed:

Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the divinity that dwelt in him manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, *ad modum recipientis--in proportion to his capacity*; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated... Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an *infant* and a *child*.



CONCLUSION

Jesus sets an example regarding the priority of our lives and for Him seeing about *His Father's business* was pre-eminent.

It is also of interest to God that children are obedient to parents; a point Luke makes concerning Jesus. Yet there might be instances when obedience to parents or other authority conflicts with God's will for an individual.

Our Text shows the governing principle in such situations as exemplified in our Lord's behaviour. The principle is this as stated by a writer: **If God is our Father, then our ultimate obedience must be to Him, and not to any earthly authority, when the two conflict.**

The Scriptures make it clear that God must be followed as the absolute, sovereign authority of our lives. When we are commanded otherwise by any authority "...we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). (See Luke 9:59-62, 12:52-53, 14:25-26; Mark 10:7:29-30). Parents should be cautious and careful that they do not stand in the way of their children following the Sovereign will God, even if this goes against what the parents might have intended for the children.

We are not told explicitly what "*His Father's business*" entailed, however it is evident that being at the Temple and having the opportunity to ask questions of the teachers was essential to Jesus' spiritual growth, as well as to expose these rabbis to the real truth by asking them questions.

This spiritual growth can then be seen in the wider context of the preparation for His public ministry which He later describes as His Father's work (will) (John 4:34; 6:38). The preparation was so important to Him that He found it necessary to act contrary to the wishes of His parents and from which we may conclude, that nothing should encumber us from access to those things which advance our spiritual growth.

The matter of spiritual growth was clearly of the utmost importance to Jesus and our spiritual growth should not be of any less importance to us. Exposure to the great teachers of His day was one means of Jesus' growth and we should identify the means of our spiritual advancement and ensure they take precedence over the other things in our lives.

One writer lists the following areas to which we should pay serious attention.

The Scriptures are essential to our growth, so that nothing should keep us from them (Ps. 19:7-14; 119 [whole psalm]; Acts 20:32; Rom. 16:25-26; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; Heb. 13:9; Jas. 1:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:2-4). So, too, is the edification and instruction provided by others in the body of Christ, which requires regular attendance and participation in the worship of the church (Psalm 73:17; Rom. 14-15; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:1-16; Heb. 10:23-25). Prayer is another vital means of fellowship with God and growth (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:18). Finally, obedience



to what we know to be the will of God is a key to our further growth (Matt. 7:24-27; Mark 4:21-25). Nothing should keep us from these vital means of growth.

The salient point Luke makes in recording this only incident from the childhood of Jesus revolves around the question, who is Jesus Christ? He was fully man and fully God and the Sovereign Lord needs not explain or excuse any of His actions. On the other hand as the human son of Mary He submitted Himself to the parental authority of Joseph and Mary. In light of His unique personage as the 'God-man' all that He said and did was right, reasonable, rational and to be accepted.

The ultimate destiny of all humanity hinges on their reaction to Jesus Christ. His humanity qualifies Him to be the *propitiation* for sins of men. His deity gives infinite value to His sacrifice and thus satisfies the Father's justice and men are thereby redeemed from eternal torment to eternal life. All are exhorted to accept Jesus Christ who is God Incarnate as their personal Saviour and have peace with God.

