

## 9. Jesus Grew Up in Nazareth

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how they can explain to people how they can receive forgiveness of sin. We saw that Simeon and Anna both spoke about Jesus and the fact that He came to redeem mankind from sin. This is the same message that we want to help our children learn to share with others. In our topic today, we are going to learn about the growth and development of Jesus in all areas of His early life.

Luke 2:39-40 says, “So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” Mary and Joseph fulfilled all that the law told them to do as they presented Jesus at the temple. We see that later they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in the area of Galilee. The book of Matthew tells us that they first went to Egypt for a period of time to protect Jesus from Herod because Herod tried to kill Jesus as a young boy.

We also see the way that Jesus grew as He developed. We read that He became strong in spirit. The word translated “strong” means *to increase in strength or to grow strong*. This word is used four times in the New Testament. It is used in Luke 1:80 to speak of the growth of John. Another place it is used is in one of the prayers of Paul for the Ephesians. Ephesians 3:14-16 says, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” In this verse, we see that the first request that Paul made for the Ephesians was that they would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. The human spirit is our inner man and it is the Holy Spirit that gives strength to our human spirit. Since Jesus is both fully God and fully man, He also was strengthened in His spirit as He grew. We also see that the grace of God was upon Jesus as He developed. Jesus experienced the loving kindness of His heavenly Father.

We go on to read about an event that happened when Jesus was 12 years old. Luke 2:41-45 says, “His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.” One of the things that Mary and Joseph, along with many of the other Jews, did every year was go to the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem.

In Deuteronomy 16:16, God had told the people of Israel, “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.” The Passover was the feast to remember how the death angel had passed over the homes of the people of Israel because they had obeyed God and placed blood on the top and sides of their door when the death angel destroyed the oldest child in every family of the Egyptians.

Passover was a one-day feast that was followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since many of the people of Galilee went to Jerusalem for these two feasts, large groups of people often traveled together as that traveled to and from the feasts.

The year Jesus was twelve, Joseph took the family and traveled with many others from Galilee to this feast just as they normally did each year. However, something different happened this year that had not happened before. After the feast was over, the group with whom Joseph and the family traveled began their trip back to Galilee. However, Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. Since there were probably several hundred people traveling together, Joseph was probably talking with some of the men and Mary with some of the women as they walked. The children were probably playing games together along the road as they walked. As a result, Mary and Joseph did not know that Jesus was not traveling with the group of people from Nazareth.

They traveled all day; when the entire group camped for the evening, Mary and Joseph started asking their friends and relatives if Jesus was with their children. Finally, they realized that no one had seen Jesus all day. Suddenly, they realized that Jesus must still be in Jerusalem. Since they had traveled an entire day, it took Mary and Joseph most of the second day to get back to the city of Jerusalem. Until evening, they probably looked at various places they had been while they were in Jerusalem.

Luke 2:46- 50 says, “Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.’ And He said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?’ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.” They were probably up early the next morning and started looking for Jesus. Apparently, they spent much of the day looking in various places in and around the city before they went to the temple.

Finally, they went to the temple. There, they found Him in the temple courtyard sitting in the middle of the teachers. He was listening to them and was also asking them questions. Here, we see that Jesus showed the attitude of a learner. He listened to the things that these teachers were teaching. He also asked them questions about the things that they taught. However, these teachers were astonished at the understanding of Jesus and the answers that He gave. About twenty years later, John 7:15 says, “And the Jews marveled, saying, ‘How does this Man know letters, having never studied?’” Even twenty years later, the Jews were amazed at the understanding and wisdom of Christ because He had never studied in Jerusalem under the well-known teachers. Here, we see that the well-known teachers realized that Jesus spoke with great wisdom twenty years earlier.

Mary and Joseph were also amazed at the fact that Jesus was sitting among the teachers and asking them questions. They had probably searched every part of the city where a twelve-year-old boy might go to explore and had not even considered that he might be in the temple until they had searched every other place. Mary and Joseph were probably very happy to see Jesus but Mary was

also upset. She said, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” The word translated “anxiously” means *with great pain, sorrow or torment*. The word is used four times in the New Testament. The word is used twice in Luke 16:24 and 25 to talk about the torment of hell. Then, it is used in Acts 20:37-38 where the word is translated “sorrowing”, “Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.” Here, we see that Mary was in great pain and fear because it had taken so long to find Jesus.

Jesus asked Mary and Joseph two questions, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” Here, we have the first recorded words of Jesus. His very first recorded words show that Christ was focused on doing the will of His Heavenly Father. Twenty years later, Christ would say in John 6:38, ““For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”” Christ knew His purpose for coming to this earth and was surprised that His mother did not understand that purpose. In fact, we read that neither Mary nor Joseph understood the meaning of the words that Jesus spoke to them that day.

Luke 2:51-52 says, “Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Here, we see a key lesson. Jesus was and is the Son of God. In fact, Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” This verse says that Jesus has all authority. Yet, Jesus chose to place Himself in subjection to His earthly parents. The word translated “subject” means *a voluntary choice to place your full potential under another*. As the Son of God, Jesus made the voluntary choice to place Himself under His earthly parents.

We also see the way that Christ continued to grow in all areas of His life. Here, we see a statement that speaks about the fact that Jesus became fully Man as well as fully God. He continued to increase in wisdom. The word translated “wisdom” is defined in James 3:17-18 where we read, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” He continued to grow in physical size. He experienced normal physical growth just like the other children. He continued to grow in favor with God. Here, we are reminded that He was continually conscious of His relationship to the Father. He continued to grow in favor with people. Here, we see that Christ knew how to develop good relationships with others. The pattern that we have in these verses for the growth of Jesus gives us a pattern as we help our physical and spiritual children in their development. We want to see them grow and mature in all areas of their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to grow to physical and spiritual maturity.