

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – Luke

SB_LK2B&3A_Chapter 2:29-3:22

Jesus' Early Childhood & The Ministry of John the Baptist

The Family Returns to Nazareth (2:39-40)

Nazareth was about 65 miles north of Jerusalem. Nazareth is where Jesus was reared after Joseph and Mary took Him to Egypt to flee from Herod's edict which was given after the visit of the Magi. All male children in Bethlehem under the age of two were killed by Herod (Matt 2:13-16). The age of two and under was selected based upon "the time which He had determined from the wise men" (Matt 2:16).

In these two verses, Luke observes the fact that Jesus, as fully human, had to grow in His understanding just as we do. Even though Jesus was the perfect God-man in hypostatic union, he still had to humbly submit to the discipline of the study and application of Hebrew Scriptures. His human spirit was filled with wisdom as a result of His diligent study of the Scriptures and as a result, the grace of God was upon Him in the form of a mind and human spirit saturated with Truth that He could apply. His wisdom did not result from the grace of God being "upon Him", but the wisdom He acquired as He grew in Truth resulted in the grace of God being upon Him. Remember, Jesus did not rely upon His deity in the execution of the Father's plan for His life. He relied upon the same divine assets that are available to us which included the ministry of the Holy Spirit to His spirit and divine revelation in the form of the Word.

Question: When did Jesus first realize that He was the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the World? *Answer:* While Scripture doesn't state the answer, it is reasonable to conclude that as Jesus studied Hebrew Scripture to include such passages as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 among others and as His parents recounted the events that attended His birth and the birth of John the Baptist, He grew in wisdom regarding His identity.

At Twelve, Jesus Amazes the Scholars (2:41-50)

The Mosaic Law required that the men of Israel make three pilgrimages each year to Jerusalem – Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Tabernacles (Ex 23:14-17; Deut 16:16). However, by the first century A.D., most men made one annual pilgrimage due to the fact that many Jews had been dispersed across such areas as Asia Minor. The one day Passover was followed by the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex 23:15; Lev 23:4-8; Deut 16:1-8). The entire eight day festival was sometimes called the Passover (Luke 22:1, 7; John 19:14; Acts 12:3-4).

Jesus' parents had traveled a day before they discovered His absence from the traveling band that contained some of His relatives. It obviously took them a day to journey back to Jerusalem and it then took them a day to find Jesus. According to the Mishnah, the age of twelve years old is one year before a boy becomes responsible for his religious commitments.¹

Question: Who fed Jesus during this time? Where did He stay? Wasn't He concerned that His parents would miss Him? *Answer:* Scripture doesn't state the answers to these questions; however, here's some conjecture on my part. At twelve, Jesus, Who had a perfect human body without the taint of the old sin nature, might have looked a little older than twelve. Perhaps He passed for a fifteen or sixteen-year-old as He might have been more physically mature. Also, His parents might have provided Him with some funds to buy food so that He could

¹ See www.bible.org and the footnote to Luke 2:42. The Mishnah is the first section of the Talmuc which was a collection of early oral interpretations of the Scriptures as compiled about A.D. 200.

have some freedom to enjoy the activities surrounding the Passover. There were many pilgrims during Passover and no doubt people slept with blankets or a bedroll of some type all over Jerusalem. Evidently, Jesus had spent much time in the synagogue in His hometown studying the scrolls that contained Hebrew Scripture and in discussion with Jewish rabbis. Jesus' response to Mary in Luke 2:49 indicates that the twelve year old Jesus had discovered His purpose and destiny through His study and had begun to execute the Father's purpose in His life. He believed that of all people, His parents would have understood that point.

Note that Jesus amazed everyone with His understanding and insight. It is possible for even a twelve year old with proper instruction in the Word to be spiritually oriented to the Father's plan for their lives. Even Jesus' parents did not understand what Jesus meant when He said that He must be about His Father's business (2:49).

Question: Are you spiritually oriented to the Father's plan for your life? Do you structure your life so that you seek after His wisdom (Proverbs 2)? Is knowing and doing His will a priority? Or is knowing and doing His will something you've rationalized away with subliminal excuses such as "I have greater understanding of the Word than all those religious types", or "I'll get to it someday when I am financially secure", or you use some other excuse for procrastinating. If Jesus was (in addition to being our Savior) the prototypical example of what a believer can be who has the same spiritual assets available to him/her, then we have no excuse for not becoming conformed to the Father's will for our lives. We will either become conformed to that image in time with rewards to follow in eternity or we will become conformed to that image in eternity having not done so in time.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

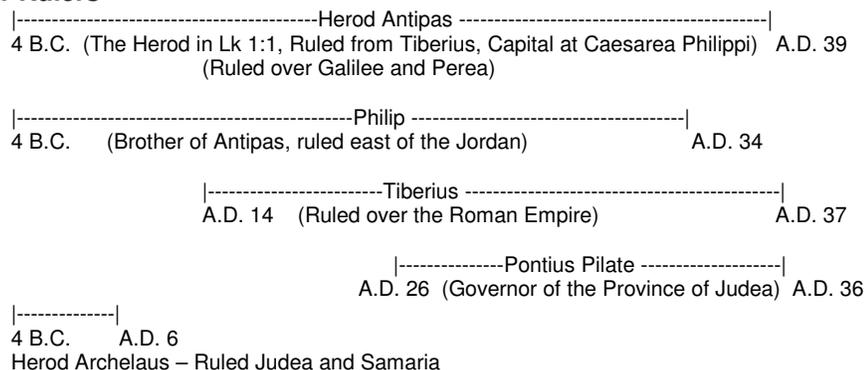
Jesus Returns to Nazareth with His Parents (2:51-52)

Note that Jesus was "subject to" His parents after He returned to Nazareth (2:51). Also, note that it was Mary whom Luke notes as having treasured these words in her heart. Personally, I believe that Luke interviewed Mary (see Luke 1:1-2) about these early years and that Joseph possibly died during Jesus' early life. After all, there is no mention of Joseph at the time of Jesus' death. Only Mary is mentioned. Note also that Jesus is said to have "increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men."

The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-22)

Tiberius Caesar began to reign in A.D. 14 after his stepfather, Augustus died. John's ministry began in the 15th year of Tiberius' reign; therefore, it was A.D. 29. Some of the significant government officials during this period and the periods in which they ruled would appear as follows:

Secular Rulers



Religious Rulers

|-----|
A.D. 7 A.D. 14
Annas, the High Priest

|-----|
A.D. 18 (Caiaphas, Annas son-in-law plus Annas' five sons) A.D. 37

The political and religious environment in Israel at this time was very complex and required the believer to understand and operate under a constantly dynamic set of circumstances that were the result of the clash between the power lusts of many different individuals. The person living in and observing such a drama had been accustomed to power shifts based upon a worldly standard that included political prowess, military force, compromise and ego. The Jewish person longed for the Messiah Who would conquer these forces by some of their own means, i.e. military power and political might. This desire was based upon many such descriptions of what Christ, the Messiah will accomplish at His Second Advent (e.g. Psa 2:9; Isa 34; Malachi 4). However, as they were to discover, God was interested in a repentant heart on the part of Israel before such a kingdom would be established (e.g. Matt 5). Some of John's hearers evidently thought that just being a Jew would suffice (Lk 3:8-9). John's response was similar to Jesus' teaching in the Beatitudes (i.e. Matt 5:3-12).

Luke's chronology is not in order here since it is obvious that John continued to baptize after it is noted that Herod imprisoned John (3:20). John had rebuked Herod for divorcing his wife to marry his own niece Herodias, who had already been the wife of his brother, Philip. Not only was a divorce under such circumstances a problem, but marrying such a close relative was prohibited by the Mosaic Law (Lev 18:16; 20:21).