

Gospel of Luke 2:41-52

Jesus knowing who he was and family relationships

Normal life

⁴¹Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

Up to this point in the narrative everything is normal. Joseph and Mary as good Jews would make the 172 km – 110 miles – according to Google maps - that's 40 hours of walking, so it was a three day journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem via transjordan and Jericho. But not alone. They would have travelled in a large company of others from Nazareth for safety. Little is known about the nature of the journey except that if every Jewish family went to Jerusalem for the Passover, this was a major movement of population. Jerusalem would have been heaving. If you have ever seen film of Mecca during the Hajj, you would get some idea of what Jerusalem was like. So the roads were crowded and Jerusalem heaving. They probably camped outside the city or in neighbouring villages like Bethany. And they would have walked. If they had a donkey, it would have carried the tents, food and clothing for the journey.

So for a 12 year old, being able to get away from parents and travel with friends would have been fun. It would have been acceptable. They would have met up for food and sleep. Not surprising that Mary and Joseph did not miss

him until the evening , then. But here the story asks a different question.

⁴³*After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.* That is the point where we ask the question **why did he stay behind?**

The danger here is that we fit our own imagination into the story. Was he left by mistake like Kevin in ‘Home alone’? Did he deliberately hide away to avoid his parents? Did he simply get so wrapped up in discussions with the teachers? We don’t know; but we know what he spent his time doing and that he was surprised by his parents not understanding he would be in the temple precincts debating the Torah.

His answer to his parents

"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

didn’t make sense to them. It seems a straightforward case of disobedience, but it isn’t. He was the Son of God, so his place was in his Father’s house. In fact the word ‘house’ is not in the text and is only used as he was in the Temple, God’s house. The literal translation of the Greek is:

Don't you know that I ought to be in the 'of my father'.

The sentence can be translated ‘*Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's business or affairs?*’ suggesting he was aware of his destiny. He was in the family business , God’s business, not just a carpenter but also Son of God. There is a genuine feel of teenage passion here. Which begs the question **“When did Jesus become aware of his identity?”**

We know who Jesus is, but when was he aware of it? The answer is we don't know. What we do know is that he was Divine from eternity and become man through conception. But his Mother and maybe his earthly father, Joseph, would have told him the amazing things that happened around him. And he would have been taught the Old Testament at the Synagogue in Nazareth. Maybe he saw himself in the scriptures. At 12 years of age he was self aware and therefore expresses it *"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's business?"*

verse 52 says *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.* Suggests his human development alongside his divine awareness went hand in hand. That his human development was reflected in his relationship with his Father.

Theologians call this The doctrine of the hypostatic union which states Jesus is fully God and fully man; his human consciousness developed, but his divine nature never changed. If you find that difficult to comprehend, so do I and its not surprising because God is beyond our understanding and therefore so is Jesus as God. What is important is encapsulated in John 1:1- 5 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

and verse 14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

To try to get their heads round this many people over the years have strayed into ideas like Jesus became God when the Holy Spirit descended on him at Baptism. That he was a son but not God himself and so on. Now clearly the plain statement of Scripture teaches us what we have just read that he was born God and he was fully Human and fully God.

The early church tackled the problem of the nature of Jesus' divinity and in 325 AD came up with the Nicene Creed

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made
man.*

One of the reasons he came as a human being was to communicate to us what God is like. So put aside the theology we don't understand and hold on to the revelation of God in Jesus.

Moving on we discovered **Jesus is surprised** at Mary and Joseph's anxiety . He would have thought it would have come from his expectation that they understood who he was. Luke is particular to note that Mary, for example, *treasured all these things in her heart*. He used similar words as he in chapter 2 verse 19 referring to what the shepherd said to quote: *But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart*.

This suggests Jesus could not remember a time when he was not the Son of his Father in heaven and his parents were aware of it.

The important point here is that Jesus knew who he was and that God was his father. That was quite a jump from traditional Jewish thinking where Abraham was the Father and Isaac and Jacob. Calling God his Father was blasphemous to the authorities in John 5:16-18

¹⁶ *So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him.* ¹⁷ *In his defence Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."* ¹⁸ *For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

He then teaches his disciples to pray
Our father in Heaven

In John 20:17 in that amazing meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden we read

Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

This is only possible because his dying on the cross and rising again lead to new birth into the family of God. By the time he began his ministry at 30 years of age he had a complete understanding of his identity

Returning to the passage
verse 51

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

This simple statement carries a lot of meaning. First, **he was an example of teenage spirituality**. The Lord of Glory was obedient to his parents, even when he disagreed with them. We think he remained at home until he begins his ministry at 30 years of age. As there is no mention of Joseph after this record, it is assumed that Joseph died and Jesus, the eldest, took over the family business as carpenter and remained there until his younger brothers and sisters could carry the responsibility .

Second **he was obedient**. Full Stop. It marks his ministry out that **he is the servant King** not the bossy leader. It is typified by his washing of the disciples feet but it is the essence of his work. He heals, he teaches, he rescues his disciples from the storm, the mob that came to arrest him and so on. Ultimately in the garden of Gethsemane he lives out the phrase he taught us

Your will be done on earth as in heaven

Luke 22:42 “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*”

Thirdly, **he submitted to being human**. He did not use his powers for self –gain, refusing the temptation to turn stones into bread in the desert. He could have challenged Pilate to a pitched battle, but chose rather to die for our sins on the cross.

We learn adult obedience as teenagers, doing what we are asked even when we think we know better. It stands us in good stead in work, in our family, in our church. The principle is expressed in Pauls’ letters, most specially in Ephesians 5:21

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

He spent the best part of his young adult life as a family member and the only record we have is verse 51

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

Philippians 2:6-8 puts it this way
*Christ Jesus: being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used
to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!*

This is the Jesus we believe in. This is the Jesus we follow. His is one with God the father, he knew it and was obedient to his parents. He knew he was Messiah and was obedient to God the Father in life and death.

Philippians response to this is:

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*