The Boy Jesus

Bible Background • ECCLESIASTES 3:1–15; LUKE 2:39–52

Printed Text • ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 7; LUKE 2:39–52

Devotional Reading • LEVITICUS 12:1–8; NUMBERS 3:11–13

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE the account of Jesus’ experience in the Temple at the age of twelve, SENSE the awe experienced by all those who witnessed Jesus’ wisdom as well as Mary and Joseph’s angst, and REJOICE in the opportunity to know the wisdom of God.

In Focus

Arthur and Dot couldn’t help but be proud of their daughter, Regina. She was a precocious child who would graduate high school at sixteen, and then to college. Of course, Arthur and Dot were concerned about Regina being around older children all the time. They prayed that their daughter would be among kids who were good influences on her, and they made sure she stayed active in her church. Things turned out very well for Regina, who was accepted at her top pick: the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Regina found college somewhat more challenging than high school but still took on double majors in engineering and in marketing. After she finished, Regina established her own engineering firm that quickly grew and obtained a large regional clientele. “I don’t understand all that you do, Regina,” Arthur said when he visited her for a lunch date. “But I’m always glad to support you. Your mom and I are excited for you.” “Thanks, Dad,” Regina said. “I am very happy that you and mom always prayed and supported me. I truly thank God for being with me and listening to me.” “God is always listening, Regina,” Dot said. “And we are too.” The wisdom of God brings blessings to all who are open to receiving it, young or old.

Can we appreciate it when someone does better work whether they are young or old?

Keep in Mind

“There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him” (Luke 2:40, NLT).

Words You Should Know

A. Asking (v. 46) eperotao (Gk.) — To demand, inquire or desire
B. Subject (v. 51) hupotasso (Gk.) — To submit oneself to; to obey or make oneself a subordinate.

Say It Correctly

Seder. SAY-dur.
Nisan. NEE-san.
Hallel. ha-LELL.
KJV

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Luke 2:39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.
40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.
41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.
42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.
43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.
44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.
45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.
46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.
47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.
48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.
49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?
50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.
51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

NLT

Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.
7 A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak.

Luke 2:39 When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee.
40 There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.
41 Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. 42 When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual.
43 After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn’t miss him at first,
44 because they assumed he was among the other travelers. But when he didn’t show up that evening, they started looking for him among their relatives and friends.
45 When they couldn’t find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there.
46 Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions.
47 All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.
48 His parents didn’t know what to think. “Son,” his mother said to him, “why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere.”
49 “But why did you need to search?” he asked. “Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?”
50 But they didn’t understand what he meant.
51 Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And his mother stored all these things in her heart.
52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.
**The People, Places, and Times**

**Feast of Passover.** The Feast of Passover celebrates the Jews’ passage from slavery to freedom and commemorates the occasion in which the death angel passed over the Hebrew households in Egypt (see Exodus 12–13). Jews are commanded to remember the night of their liberation by partaking of the Seder, a traditional meal with each item of food representing part of the liberation story. During biblical times, the seven-day celebration was held in Jerusalem and attendance by the entire family was required (see Exodus 23:14–17). Why is it important to gather with family during an important religious celebration?

**Background**

The Gospel of Luke provides the most comprehensive picture of Jesus’ ministry of all four of the Gospels, with about one-third of the material included only appearing in this account. Luke focuses on Jesus as the Son of Man, the promised Messiah.

Beginning with the birth announcements of John the Baptist and Jesus, Luke provides multiple indicators of Jesus’ divine nature, while revealing his true humanity.

When Mary and Joseph went to present Jesus in the Temple, the elderly Simeon was led there by the Spirit. He saw Jesus, took Him up in his arms, boy Messiah, but 2:19 says that Mary pondered these things she witnessed in her heart.

*How do events at our birth affect our upbringing?*

**At-A-Glance**

1. A Time for Everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)
3. Boy Jesus in the Temple (vv. 41–52)

**In Depth**

1. **A Time for Everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7)**

It is believed that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes near the end of his life. As the wealthiest and wisest king of his time (1 Kings 3:10–13), his experiences were vast. Unlike his father David, he failed to remain wholeheartedly committed to the Lord, led astray to worship idols because of his multiple relationships with Gentile women. His thesis after surveying life was that “everything was meaningless,” but that in the end it was best to “fear God and keep his commandments” (12:13–14).

The “Time for Everything” poem (3:1–8), compares opposite occurrences, and Solomon surmises that every activity has an appropriate point in time and duration, and that in the end He acknowledges God is sovereign over all.

Verse 7 may reference mourning, as ancient Jews would tear clothes and be silent but would mend and speak when the season of mourning was over. However, the latter portion could also refer to the truth that there is wisdom in knowing when to hold onto words, and when to share them. In Luke 2, we see the time has come for prophecy to be fulfilled

Mary and Joseph prove to be devout Jews. From Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel (1:38), to her song magnifying God for what He had done (1:46–53), to Joseph’s obedience in not divorcing Mary (Matthew 1:18–24), they consistently demonstrate faith and obedience.

They continue to follow the Law after Jesus’ birth. Circumcising Him on the eighth day, they name Him “Jesus” as instructed by the angel. After the forty days of purification, Mary and Joseph travel from Bethlehem to the temple in Jerusalem, to present Jesus to God, as required for the firstborn son. The ceremony required a sacrifice—either a lamb or two pigeons. The couple’s two pigeons indicate that they were poor, but that was not a hindrance to their faithfulness. And once it was complete, they go home.

Afterward, the boy Jesus grows and becomes strong, as any child could typically be expected to do. However, His divinity is revealed as the grace of God filled Him with supernatural wisdom.

3. Boy Jesus in the Temple (vv. 41–52)

As required each year, Mary and Joseph make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover, the feast that commemorated the death angel “passing over” the firstborn in Israel when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt. At twelve years old, this would possibly have been a year of preparation for Jesus, as according to Jewish custom, Jewish boys were considered and presented as men at thirteen.

After the week-long festival, the entire family starts the journey back to Jerusalem. They are twenty miles away before Mary and Joseph realized that Jesus had not joined them. After three days, they located him in the temple.

Since conception, there had been glimpses that the “grace of God was upon Jesus.” However, Mary and Joseph are still not prepared to find Him deeply engaged in theological discussions with well-respected rabbis. He is not merely listening, but understanding, eagerly inquiring and answering questions, which astonished all.

As any mother would, Mary questions Jesus. His response, well beyond his years, indicates that while they had not yet come to fully understand, He already definitively knew He had been commissioned by God for a specific purpose.

Jesus, being fully divine, yet a fully human boy, then willingly submits to their authority, returning home to Nazareth, where He would continue to grow—physically and spiritually. There would be no mention of his life again until it was time for Him to go public in ministry, eighteen years later.

Search the Scriptures
1. Where do Mary and Joseph find Jesus? What does Jesus call the place?
2. Where do we see both Mary and Jesus knowing there is “a time to speak and a time to stay silent”?

Discuss the Meaning
Solomon talks about a time for everything and comes to understand that God sovereignly controls all.
What does this reveal to you about time, prophecy and God?

Liberating Lesson
Much attention is given to Jesus’ ministry as an adult. His conception and birth is the focus every Christmas; His death, burial, and resurrection on Resurrection Sunday. However, little attention is given to the subtle ways God intentionally showed Jesus’ parents in childhood, who he was destined to be. It appears that they knew it cognitively, but not experientially. In contrast to Anna, Simeon, and the shepherds who worshiped the Messiah,
Mary and Joseph saw a child—their child. As a result, they seemed to underestimate and even get frustrated, when God’s power and leading were evident in His life.

We often do the same. Not only do we underestimate God’s power in our own lives but in the lives of others. We put parameters on how God can use someone—he is too young or too old, her personality is too quirky, his past too checkered. We sit in awe of a child who seems wiser than his age dictates but do not encourage his spiritual growth, neglecting to recognize that God works through and in children as well. We put God in a box, and when He does not “fit,” instead of adjusting our expectations, we get frustrated. In doing so, we miss the opportunity to marvel in God’s greatness and worship Him in response.

Application for Activation
Mary and Joseph were living their lives when one day, God sent an angel and changed everything. While we will not have such a drastic experience as that, there has probably been some redirection in life. Spend time this week reflecting on how God has redirected your life. Consider your response to the change. Was it one of joy, worship, and obedience? In hindsight, what clarity do you now have?

There may be ways that God is prompting your heart now. Journal, pray and discuss it with someone with godly wisdom who will encourage and counsel you. Then, choose obedience.

Follow the Spirit
What God wants me to do:
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________

Remember Your Thoughts
Special insights I have learned:
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________
______________________________________

More Light on the Text

Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Children go to school on weekdays. Many believers go to church on Sunday mornings. Most people sleep at night. There is a time for every activity. Time passing can be just a meaningless clock ticking away, or we can see it as having a “purpose” as God intended it.

Verse 7 seems tinged with sorrow, for typically a Jew would “rend” his garments to express sorrow over death (Genesis 37:34; Joshua 7:6; 2 Samuel 3:31; Job 1:20). Its companion phrase (a time to keep silence) may also signify silent sorrow (see Job 2:12–13; John 11:20). If we could only master the last part of verse 7—“a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Sometimes our silence causes problems or does not intervene to prevent them out of fear. Other times we need to be silent and instead speak and spark conflict and hurt. Truly our voices can be great tools for both good and evil. In the case of young Jesus, He spoke before it was socially acceptable, but His words were the words of wisdom and truth that needed to be heard by those in the Temple.
Luke 2:39 When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. 40 There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.

The requirements of the Law of the Lord is referred to were Jesus’ circumcision and dedication as the firstborn male in the Temple in Jerusalem. During that trip to keep the covenant God made with Israel, Simeon, an elder, and Anna, a prophetess, both prophesied over Jesus that He was the Messiah that had been long awaited in Israel. With that revelation in mind, Joseph and Mary return to Galilee, their hometown. Verse 40 first states the expected pattern of the child Jesus growing up in good health and strength. It is the desire of every loving parent that their child grow up healthy, and Jesus is no exception as fully human. But the second part of the verse gives another glimpse into Jesus’ anointing and divinity: He was filled with wisdom and God’s favor was on Him in a way that was recognizable even at a young age. Jesus was again affirmed as special from birth to childhood.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

The feasts were part of the Jewish customs and practices. Celebrating the feasts was in fulfillment of the covenant God had with them. The Passover feast mentioned in this verse was the first of the three major annual festivals of the Jews; it was celebrated in Jerusalem in the month of Nisan (March–April), from the 14th to the 21st. The first day, the 14th, was the actual Passover feast, while the remaining days were called Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover commemorated the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and the sparing of their firstborn when the destroying angel smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. The Greek word translated “Passover,” pascha (PAS-khah) in this verse, is used to refer to the meal, the day, the festival, or the special sacrifices connected with the Passover feast. But specifically, it refers to the paschal supper eaten on the first day of the feast, the 14th of Nisan. The Hebrew word translated “Passover” is pasakh (PEH-sakh); it means “to pass over, skip over or to spare.” Later observances of the Passover differ in certain respects from the first and original celebrated in Egypt on the night before the deliverance. The Passover lamb was slain in the Temple, rather than at home (Deuteronomy 16:5–6); the blood was sprinkled on the altar instead of the door posts; and apart from the family sacrifice for the Passover meal, there were public and national sacrifices offered each of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Each year the people recited the meaning of the Passover; they later started singing the Hallel (Psalms 113–118) during the meal. These changes made to the Passover, and it became a perpetual ordinance that made it last through generations, even to the time of Jesus. In keeping with the yearly observance, every devout Jew, including Jesus’ parents, was expected to go to Jerusalem, to the Temple for the Passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. 43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

Jesus’ parents observed the Passover from year to year. In the course of time, as indicated by the stage of Jesus’ growth, He became twelve years old. At this time, He went to Jerusalem for the Passover according to the custom of the feast. The Greek word translated “custom” is ethos (EH-thoce); it signifies “usage prescribed by law; a manner, habit; a rite or ceremony.” The word translated “feast” is heorte (heor-TAY); it means a “holy day.” Making the journey to Jerusalem, performing the special sacrifices, eating the Passover meal, and all that is done in observing the Passover had become a habit or rite prescribed by Law for the Jews. All these acts were performed during holy days—specific seasons or days set apart unto the Lord. The feast lasted over a period of eight days. The first and the last days were Sabbath days in which no one was required to do any servile work other than making preparations for the meal. Those who traveled to Jerusalem from other towns, like Jesus and His parents, had to stay in Jerusalem during the period of the feast. This is what is meant by “they … fulfilled the days.”

After they had observed the days of the feast, the boy Jesus waited behind in Jerusalem while His parents headed back home. As someone who had a divine mission to accomplish and a purpose to fulfill on earth, His waiting behind in Jerusalem immediately after Passover was certainly in accordance with His mission.
Consequently, the Passover of Jesus’ twelfth year on Earth occasioned His first purposeful interaction with the Jewish public. As the Son of God who came to fulfill God’s will, Jesus’ tarrying wasn’t an act of His own will but of God’s. There was a heavenly outpouring of spiritual virtue upon the boy Jesus at the age of twelve to reveal His divine nature. In the meantime, His parents didn’t realize they left Him behind as they journeyed home.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

In the course of the journey, assumption gave way to awareness. Mary and Joseph became aware that Jesus was not in the group after traveling an entire day. The Greek word for “company” (sunodia, soo-no-DEE-ah) denotes “companions on a journey” or a “company of travelers.” When they discovered that He was not in their group, they started searching for Him among their relatives. The Greek word translated “sought” (anazeteo, ah-nah-dzay- TEH-oh) denotes “to seek carefully,” that is, to search out someone while having some difficulty in the process. This means it was quite an effort trying to search for Jesus through the group of travelers. We see hints here of how Mary and Joseph traveled. It was a significant distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem, and travel is safer in numbers. Since all Jews are expected to come to Jerusalem for the Passover, there must have been many families on the road. The holy family must have been traveling with a large “company” of “kinsfolk and acquaintance” and assumed Jesus was with someone else in their caravan as they set out.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

After three days of searching for Jesus, His parents eventually found Him in the Temple in discussion with the doctors. The Greek word translated “doctors” (didaskalos, dee-DASkah- loce) signifies “instructor, teacher, or master.” These doctors were teachers of the Law who taught the Jewish religion; they were also called scribes, professional expositors of the laws of Judaism. The scribes underwent special training and had to pass rigid examinations before being officially recognized. They were highly respected within the Jewish community. These were the caliber of people with whom the boy Jesus was having an intellectual discussion at age twelve.

He was listening and “asking them” questions. The Greek word translated “asking” (eperotao, eh-peh-row-TAH-oh) signifies “to demand, inquire or desire” and suggests asking with some eagerness. Jesus seemed to demand answers from the doctors based on what He desired to know. An impartation by the Holy Spirit certainly inspired Him at that age to make intelligent inquiries that astonished these learned doctors. He exhibited profound understanding; He gave them amazing answers. To them, He was a sort of prodigy. They didn’t know He had a divine nature, which was actually manifesting. He did not only inquire of them, He also gave them answers. The Greek word translated “answers” (apokrisis, ah-POEkree- sees), meaning “a response,” tells us that Jesus was also asked questions to which He gave responses. His answers, He revealed an understanding that astonished the doctors in the Temple.

It is of great spiritual benefit to be inquisitive about spiritual matters. This will cause us to make inquiries about God, His Word, and the life we possess in Him. An inquisitive disposition is sure to bring inspiration, and by inspiration we get illuminating knowledge that leads to growth and spiritual maturity. Within the community of faith, it is therefore advisable to dialogue with others and to make inquiries of those whom the Lord has ordained to teach us His Word. This might require us to voice our convictions about certain issues of the faith and to accept correction when we are wrong. In this way, we will grow in faith and wisdom. This is why we have to commit ourselves to lifelong learning in the community of faith.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.
The Greek word translated “amazed” (ekplesso, ek-PLACE-so) means “to be struck with astonishment.” This was how Jesus’ parents felt upon discovering Him in the temple. They didn’t expect to see Him in the temple with the teachers of the Law. The fact that He was unperturbed and feeling comfortable with these learned men inflamed their amazement and was in sharp contrast to their feelings of anxiety that had mounted over the period of a three-day search for Him. Anxiety made Jesus’ mother upset about His actions. In an outburst of emotions typical of mothers, she inquired why He had done this to them. The Greek word translated “dealt” (poieo, poy-EH-oh) simply means “to do” so that phrase denotes “hath done to us.” Though she knew that her son was the Messiah, the Son of God, she was still puzzled as to what the reason could be for His unusual behavior.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

It was customary for a Jewish teacher to instruct his students by asking probing and leading questions. Jesus seems to already use this technique when He replies to His mother with a question that offers an explanation: a question that justifies His presence in the temple, and explains His absence from the caravan of travelers. The Greek word translated “wist” (eido, AY-do) means “to know, to be aware,” hence “Wist ye not” can be translated, “Don’t you know?” or “Are you not aware?” Jesus’ response appears to admonish His parents that they should have known He would be somewhere on assignment for His Heavenly Father. His reply reveals His willingness and commitment to his Father’s business while making them aware of its importance.

In His question, He speaks of an inner compulsion. He says, “I must ….” The Greek word for “must” (dei, DAY) denotes “it is necessary”; it is used to indicate a necessity brought about by certain circumstances. In this case, Jesus is saying, by reason of His Father’s will, He had to do His Father’s business. It was necessary for a divine purpose to be fulfilled, which made every other thing less significant—even traveling back home with His parents.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

The arrival of Jesus’ parents seemed to mark the end of His three-day mission in the Temple. In his reply to His mother in verse 49, He questioned her with His spiritual authority as the Christ, the Son of God, who came from heaven to fulfill God’s work on earth. But His full awareness of the fact that He was human, a boy of twelve, and still under parental care, made Him conduct Himself in the most appropriate manner: He went back to Nazareth with His parents and became subject to them. The Greek word translated “subject” (hupotasso, hoo-POE-TASS-so) means “to submit oneself to, to obey or make oneself a subordinate.” He was still a child, Jesus complied with natural order by submitting Himself to the authority and protection of His parents. His mother became a repository of His sayings. The Greek word translated “kept” (diatereo, dee-ah-tay–REH-oh) signifies “to keep carefully, to observe strictly.” This gives us the idea of Jesus’ mother meticulously collecting every saying of Jesus and storing them in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Every child is expected to grow into adulthood. Growth in children is characterized by physical, mental, and spiritual development. As Jesus grew up, He increased in wisdom. The Greek word for “wisdom” (sophia, so-FEE-ah) is used in a broad sense to mean “human and spiritual wisdom.” Increasing in wisdom is an indication of spiritual development and growing in the Holy Spirit, for the wisdom of God is one of the principal manifestations of the Spirit in one’s life.

Other attributes accompanied wisdom to bring about Jesus’ spiritual development. Jesus increased in stature. The Greek word for “stature” (helikia, hay-lee-KEE-ah) signifies “age, maturity in years or size.” Jesus grew normally physically, denoting His human aspect alongside His divine aspects. He also increased in favor. The word translated “favor” (Gk. charis, KHA-ree-cee) denotes “graciousness or grace.” It speaks of the divine
influence of blessings upon the heart, and its reflection in the life of a person. This graciousness or divine influence in Jesus’ life continuously attracted benefits, gifts, pleasure, and acceptability from God and people.
Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY
Everything Has Its Time and Season
(Ecclesiastes 3:2–8)

TUESDAY
Perform Your God-Given Task
(Ecclesiastes 3:9–15)

WEDNESDAY
The Firstborn Belong to God
(Numbers 3:11–13)

THURSDAY
Jesus Presented to the Lord
(Luke 2:21–24)

FRIDAY
Simeon Praises God for the Child
(Luke 2:25–35)

SATURDAY
Anna Speaks about the Christ Child
(Luke 2:36–38)

SUNDAY
The Wise Boy Jesus Amazes Teachers
(Ecclesiastes 3:1,7; Luke 2:39–52)