

Young Jesus in the Temple

Key Verse: “*Why were you searching for me? he asked. Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?*”
—**Luke 2:49**, *New International Version*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 2:41-52

WHEN JESUS WAS TWELVE

years old he went with his parents, Mary and Joseph, to Jerusalem to keep the “Festival of the Passover,” also called the feast of unleavened bread. (Luke 2:41,42, *NIV*) This was a requirement under the Jewish Law. “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place

which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.” (Deut. 16:16) Mary and Joseph, being of a righteous heart, knew the importance of keeping God’s law to the best of their ability, and so they made this annual journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem, a distance of about sixty miles.

When “the festival was over,” Mary and Joseph began the trip back to their home in Nazareth, together with their relatives and friends. Young Jesus had stayed in Jerusalem, and since so many were traveling together back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph did not realize he was missing from the group until they had traveled a full day’s journey. They looked among the entire traveling

company and “when they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him,” which likewise required a day’s journey.—Luke 2:43-45, *NIV*

After arriving in Jerusalem, they searched for Jesus all day, without success. This was now the third day that Jesus had been missing from his family. Finally, “after three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”—vss. 46,47, *NIV*

Mary, although thankful and relieved that her son was found safe and well, said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.” (vs. 48, *NIV*) This was a natural and reasonable response from a concerned parent, especially considering Jesus was only twelve years old.

Jesus’ reply, recorded in our Key Verse, was quite astounding. He, in effect, reminded his mother that the Temple in Jerusalem is the first place they should have thought to look for him. Mary had been told by an angel, even before Jesus’ birth, that he was to be “the Son of God,” and that “his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:31-35, *NIV*) Therefore, she should have realized that from a very young age Jesus would have a great desire to learn as much as he could about God’s plan, his responsibilities as a Jew born under the Law, and what God’s will was for him. How appropriate it was for her young son to sit at the feet of the teachers in the Temple, soaking up the wealth of information they provided.

Jesus realized, although it was important for him to gain as much knowledge and understanding of God’s plans and purposes as he could at a young age, it was proper for him to be subject to his parents until he reached adulthood. Thus the account states, “Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. ... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”—Luke 2:51,52, *NIV* ■