

## Teen Lesson 7: Age 12 and Baptism

Covering Luke 2:41—3:38 and Matthew 3:13-17

*Please read all of the highlighted scriptures as you study this lesson, especially the ones at the beginning of paragraphs. These are part of the "story flow" and the lesson won't make sense otherwise! The other referenced scriptures support the text and you can increase your understanding by reading these as well.*

At the end of our last lesson, Joseph and his family had just returned to Judea from Egypt (Matthew 2:19-23). If you remember, they had escaped to Egypt because Joseph had been warned in a dream that Herod would try to kill Jesus. And, in fact, Herod did have ALL boys up to two years old killed (in and around Bethlehem where Jesus was born) in an attempt to do just that. After Herod died, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that it was safe to return to Judea.

Jesus was just a small child when Joseph and Mary brought Him back from Egypt and set up home in Nazareth. But the Bible doesn't tell us anymore about His life until He was 12 years old. We'll pick up the story in Luke.<sup>1</sup>

**Luke 2:41-42** — There were three times or seasons in the year when the Israelites were to appear before God. We find them listed in **Deuteronomy 16:16**.

So, the Israelites were to appear before God during the Passover/Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy 16:2 shows us that this would be at a place where God would choose to place His name. Originally this was at Shiloh (see Joshua 18:1-8, 31; Judges 21:19; Jeremiah 7:12). Later, God changed the place of worship to Jerusalem, where Solomon had built a "house for God" (see 1 Kings 5:2-5; 1 Kings 8:20, 26-29; 1 Kings 9:1-3).

In this lesson we're not going to address the question of WHY we still keep these Feasts today. Most of you already know why we do and this material is covered in the first Holy Day Lesson (*The Holy Days and God's Plan*) in the Holy Day series. But why don't we keep the Feasts in Jerusalem, in the place where God put His name?

Well, there are several reasons for this (which we'll explore more fully in a future lesson), but basically it's because Christ showed that the place *where* we worship as New Testament Christians is no longer important.<sup>2</sup> It is the "spirit" or attitude that we have *when* we worship that is important (see John 4:19-24).<sup>3</sup> However, each Feast site

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<sup>1</sup> The information for this lesson was gathered from a number of sources, including *The Life Application Bible*, the *Jewish New Testament Commentary* and the *Youth Bible, New Century Version*.

<sup>2</sup> The key here is that the Church is no longer national Israel with its own borders, but spread abroad throughout all nations. When God's Kingdom is established on the earth, and the 12 tribes of Israel are once again one physical nation, Jerusalem will become the world capital and the centre of worship (see, for example, Zechariah 14:16-17).

<sup>3</sup> Worship comes from the Old English word "weorthscipe" (worthship), meaning worthiness, respect, honour, dignity, reverence, etc. We show our reverence and respect for God by obeying Him and by how we live our lives.

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that we use today is chosen carefully after the ministry have gathered all of the facts and prayerfully sought God's guidance on the matter.

Apparently not all of the Jews at the time of Christ's birth obeyed the Law about going to the Feasts, especially if they lived as far away as Nazareth. But Joseph and Mary were devout and practicing Jews, so they went every year.

**Luke 2:42-44** — Today we don't keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread all together in one place like they did,<sup>4</sup> but what happened here would be like your parents travelling home from the Feast of Tabernacles without you! It's hard to imagine, isn't it? And it's not something that would happen in our day because we usually travel together as a family to the Feast - in our own car or by airplane. But when Jesus lived, modern methods of travel hadn't been invented and people did most of their travelling on foot. And when they travelled to or from the Feasts they would often walk together with a group of friends and extended family. So Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus was somewhere in the group when they left Jerusalem. The fact that they didn't feel the need to check up on their son shows that He was responsible and mature for His age - and they trusted Him to be where He should be. So it must have been quite a shock when they discovered that He wasn't actually with them.

**Luke 2:45-47** — When they finally found Jesus, He was sitting with the teachers in the temple. He was listening to them AND asking questions - and everyone who heard Him was amazed at the understanding He had.

**Luke 2:48-50** — It seems like His parents didn't really understand who He was! But Jesus' response shows that they should have - especially if they'd considered the unusual events surrounding His birth, what the angels had told them, what Simeon and Anna had said about Him in the temple (see Luke 2:25-38), and if they'd asked themselves why the Magi had come bearing gifts. Magi brought gifts to kings - not to every newborn baby boy!

The Jews at that time knew what the prophecies in the Old Testament<sup>5</sup> said about a king who would come to rule the earth (see Isaiah 9:1-7 for example). And they were looking for this king (the Messiah) to come and deliver them from Roman rule. (They didn't understand that the Messiah would first come to give His life and bring *spiritual* deliverance - and then return LATER to rule the earth.) Joseph and Mary were also familiar with the prophecies of the coming Messiah, but despite everything that had

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<sup>4</sup> Because the Church is not the physical nation of Israel, but *spiritual* Israel, spread throughout all nations.

<sup>5</sup> The *Extra Study Activity Sheet* included with Lesson 6 reviewed some of these.

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happened and what they had been told, it appears that they still didn't really understand that their son WAS the Messiah. If they had, their natural reaction would have been to be overly protective, and they wouldn't have been able to raise Jesus normally. But it is apparent from Jesus' response to them in verse 49 - "...didn't you know that I must be about my Father's business" - that HE understood who He was.

**Luke 2:51-52** — Notice that Jesus was obedient. The little we are told of His life shows that He DID keep God's Law and His commandments - which included being obedient to His parents.

After this there is no mention of Jesus again until He begins His ministry at the age of 30. So what did He do between the ages of 12 and 30?

Well, the Bible gives us some clues. We read in **Mark 6:1-3** that the people in Jesus' home town were amazed when they heard Jesus teaching in the synagogue as an adult. From their response we learn several things. Jesus was a carpenter and He had brothers and sisters. So He obviously lived the life of a normal boy growing up in a Jewish family, and He had learned His father's trade, as most boys did at that time. He was well known in the community and the people knew Him and each of His family by name. He obviously earned enough money from the work He did to buy good quality clothing because the robe He wore was a good one, without any seams in it - and when He was crucified, the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it (John 19:23). Jesus' parents would have taught Him from the Scriptures and expected Him to live God's way of life. And, as we've just seen, by the age of 12 He was already very familiar with what the Scriptures say and was able to discuss spiritual things with the teachers in the temple. Clearly, He was highly intelligent and a lot more mature than most 12 year olds today!

It is also commonly believed (though the Bible is silent about this) that Joseph died while Jesus was still fairly young (i.e. after Jesus was 12, but before he was 30), and that He spent some time as a young adult travelling with one of His relatives to different countries.

The next recorded event in Jesus' life is His baptism by John the Baptist. Please read through the account in **Mark 1:1-11** to set the scene (we'll focus specifically on John the Baptist in the next lesson).

**Matthew 3:13-15** gives us some more details. It's interesting that John didn't think he should baptise Jesus. Why do you think he thought that?

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If you look at verse 11 you'll see that John baptised in water for the REPENTANCE of sins. But Jesus didn't need to repent because He hadn't sinned (**Hebrews 4:15**). John may have felt uncomfortable about baptising Jesus because he somehow understood this. So why did Jesus insist on being baptised? **Matthew 3:15** gives us the answer. It was 'to fulfil all righteousness' - to do everything the way God wanted it done. Jesus knew that He had to do things the "right" way - His Father's way! And He of all people understood the significance of baptism and how it related to the repentance of, and forgiveness of, sins. After all, He had come to this earth to die for us and make that forgiveness possible! So Jesus was baptised and, in doing so, set an example for us. The difference is that we have all sinned and need to be baptised as an outward sign that we are sorry for, and have repented of, our sins - and that we have accepted Christ's sacrifice to forgive those sins. But Christ didn't need to be forgiven because He hadn't sinned!

**Matthew 3:16-17** — When Jesus was baptised, God called Him "my beloved son". One day we will also become God's sons and daughters and part of His family. But there is a difference. Jesus is God's son in a unique way - He is the only *begotten* Son of God, LITERALLY begotten by God the Father. Each of us will be "adopted" and made God's sons and daughters THROUGH (and because of) Jesus Christ (**Romans 8:23** and **Ephesians 1:3-5**).

God also said that Jesus was His beloved son in whom He was 'well pleased'. This is similar to language used in Isaiah 42:1-4, a prophecy about the servant God would choose (see also Luke 9:35). It's interesting that Christ used the same kind of language in His parables about the Kingdom of God, when He commended those who use their talents and abilities faithfully (see Matthew 25:21-23 and Luke 19:17). One day we hope that God will say these words to us as His sons and daughters.

After the account of Jesus' baptism in Luke, there is a list of His genealogy - His ancestry (Luke 3:23-38). This subject is covered in the *Extra Study Activity Sheet* included with this lesson, and as we are studying the life of Christ, you might find it helpful to read this as part of your study. Rather surprisingly, it's not just a list of boring names!

### Lessons for Us

Let's finish by examining some of the lessons we can learn from Christ's life as a young person. There are at least four things we can pick out and apply to our own lives.

First of all, we learned that Jesus was obedient to His parents. If we want to become like Christ (which should be the goal of all Christians) then we need to learn to

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be obedient and respectful to our parents. Think of ways you can do this even better than you already are, and ask for God's help to put them into practice (**Ephesians 6:1-3**).

Secondly, Jesus learned a trade or skill. Not many of you have the opportunity to learn a trade while you are growing up, so how can you be like Christ in this area? Well, if Jesus learned a trade it means that He had to apply Himself - He had to be willing to learn and WORK at what He was doing. You can do that at school and with your schoolwork in preparation for the time when you will get a job. You can also think about your talents and try to develop them (**Ecclesiastes 9:10; Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 23:12**).

Thirdly, Jesus knew the Scriptures well. They were important to Him and He discussed them with His elders. You can follow His example and get to know the Scriptures by reading and studying the Bible, and by discussing what it says with your parents and friends (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

And finally, Jesus practiced righteousness. This means that He obeyed God in everything and lived a sinless life. Obviously we will never be as perfect as Christ was because we have all sinned! But God expects each of us to follow Christ's example and *become* (or work toward becoming) perfect (**Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16**). We will never complete the process in our lifetime, but we should certainly strive for perfection and try to live the way God wants us to. But how do you know what that way is? Well, you've already learned a lot about God's way of life from your parents and the Church, but to find out more you need to read and study the Bible - God's Word - for yourself. It tells us all about God's way of life and HOW to live it.

Studying God's Word is foundational to the success of your future life - both now and eternally - so I hope that it's something you will begin to do regularly. 😊 If you need to be reminded about the importance of this, or need some tips about how to study the Bible, then check out (or review) Lesson 3, *Build a Friendship with God*, which covers these topics.