

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: January 27, 2008

Being Prepared By Life For The Father's Will

by Dan Trygg

“When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. ⁴⁶ Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. ⁴⁸ When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’ ⁴⁹ And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in things of My Father?’ ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. ⁵¹ And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Lk. 2:45-52

Did you ever wonder what it was like for Jesus to grow up in this world? Have you ever thought about what He was like, or what His relationship with His earthly parents was? We don't have very much information given to us about His childhood years, just the brief statement, “The Child was growing and becoming strong, being filled with wisdom; and God's grace (attractive graciousness) was upon Him” (Lk. 2:40). That doesn't tell us much, except that He experienced a fairly normal process of growth and development, maybe with a little more wisdom than the average kid, and a noticeable sensitivity and kindness about His character. From the outside, He probably had to deal with some of the negative remarks of some of the Nazareth gossips, who possibly called to remembrance the questionable circumstances surrounding Mary's pregnancy. These rumors may have trickled down to other children, especially if His four brothers and sisters did not look like He did. If part of God's requirement for Him was that “He was obligated to be like us in all respects” (Heb. 2:17) and that He had to be “tempted in all things as we are” (Heb. 4:15), then you can bet that He must have had to deal with the cruelty of classmates and the harassment of older bullies. Nevertheless, He managed to weather those tests and hurtful remarks without being mean in return, and won the respect of most people by His good character. He learned how to take crap from people without giving it back in return (1 Pet. 2:23), and His kind restraint served to silence most of those who were inclined to try to pick on Him.

Here, at the end of Luke 2, we have a brief glimpse into Jesus' life at age 12. This is recorded for us because of its significance in light of His life purpose. The story is undoubtedly a memory shared with Luke by Mary herself, but it is rich with insight as to the realization of the young Jesus regarding who He was. In addition, Jesus provides to us a profound example through His response to the situation in life in which He found Himself.

The occasion was the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus was 12 years of age. Luke tells us that his parents customarily went up to the Feast each year. This would not be surprising, because the Law required all Jewish males to go up to Jerusalem for feasts three times each year (Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:1-16). Since we know Joseph and Mary were very devout in their faith, we would expect them to be compliant with the OT Law. So, from the time He was a baby, Jesus would have made the journey with His parents, friends, relatives and neighbors, travelling from Nazareth to Jerusalem for a time of celebration and worship to the Lord. This particular Feast was the Passover, a memorial of God's mighty deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt that initiated the birth of Israel as a nation and a covenant people of God. What was different this year was that Jesus was now a young man of 12, a year of special instruction and preparation for becoming a “son of the commandment” (*bar mitzvah*) at age 13, when one was recognized as having adult responsibilities before God. Even though He had gone with His parents to Jerusalem all of these years, He was more keenly aware of the significance of the Temple, the ordinances, the Feast of the Passover, and the spiritual meaning behind the practices He had seen and participated in for years. Consequently, He was hungry to understand, and was filled with questions.

It was generally the practice for families to go up to the Temple one last time before leaving the city to return to their homes. Probably it was Jesus' preoccupation with His questions that caused Him to miss the departure of His family caravan. Being a dutiful and obedient child, He had previously been quite responsible to stick close to the group, so His parents probably expected Him to be watchful and to leave when they did. They undoubtedly were distracted with keeping His younger siblings in tow, as well (cf. Matt. 13:55,56). So it happened that somehow Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem while the rest of the caravan headed for home. He wasn't really missed until suppertime that evening. Mary and Joseph expected that He was playing, or hanging out with other members of the Nazareth contingent that were traveling together. When He did not show up for supper, however, they began to look for Him. They searched from campsite to campsite, family by family, until they had exhausted all possibilities, and came to the

horrible realization that He was not with the group, at all. So, having made arrangements with relatives, they journeyed back to Jerusalem to look for their Son.

They had already traveled a day's journey, so it took them a day to get back to the city. Once there, they started searching for Him, probably in the places where they had stayed, or at the houses of friends or acquaintances who lived in Jerusalem. Probably at the end of the third day, exhausted from their searching, they went up to the Temple at the time for prayer, and found Him sitting with the rabbis. He was listening to their teachings, and asking questions. Apparently, though He was not among their disciples, His understanding and questions were so insightful that they were intrigued by Him, engaging in discussion rather than impatiently dismissing Him. Mary and Joseph were amazed to see Him there, and not a little exasperated at His unusual behavior. They rebuked Him, asking Him why He had treated them as He had. They had been grieved, thinking that they had lost Him, and had been searching high and low for Him. Jesus' response to them is very telling, "Why were you searching for Me? Did you not know that it is necessary for Me to be in the things of My Father?" This was not meant as a smart-alec comment or a disrespectful retort. Jesus had honestly thought they would know right where He would be. He had grown up relying on their guidance and judgment concerning His life. This is probably the first time that He clearly experienced the reality of knowing something about His life purpose that they did not have an understanding of. For all that had been revealed to them 12 years before did not prepare them to grasp how His life was to unfold. His Father in heaven would have to show Him, all in good time.

There was no debate or arguing with them. Mary and Joseph could see the sincerity of His response. Based upon His character, they knew He was not talking back to them. They could probably see, too, that His choice to be in the Temple was reasonable. After all, that was the last place they knew He was. It would only make sense that they look for Him there. Note, too, that in spite of Mary and Joseph's emotions, they did not lose control or yell at Him. They held their tongues. They recognized that miscommunication, misperception and misunderstanding happen. It was of no value to assign fault or blame to what was simply different perceptions of what course of action to follow in a given situation. Jesus had good reason for His choice, and they recognized that. What was there to say?

In spite of this experience, however, Jesus went back to Nazareth and was being subject to them. The Greek for this means "He was (ongoingly) ordering-under (for Himself) to them". This is the amazing part of this story. Apparently the experience in the Temple was a clear glimpse of who He really was. He knew that God was His Father in a new, deeper, more personal way than you and I could ever understand. He was not unaware that His understanding and insight was far greater than that of other boys His age, maybe even beyond that of most adult men. He was brilliant, a child prodigy. Furthermore, He knew for the first time that God had an unusual calling on His life, ...something very important. It would have been so easy to despise the rough and humble circumstances of His Nazareth home, and want to be schooled under the great rabbis in Jerusalem. It would have been tempting to look down on His parents, who no longer were able to keep up to His theological musings, or capable of discussing with Him as those erudite teachers at Jerusalem had. We see none of this, however. What we see instead was a humble contentment to be exactly where God had Him, trusting that His Father in heaven would bring into His life the lessons and experiences that were designed to bring out His true greatness. As Peter says, He "kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously..." (I Pet. 2:23). His heart was very much like the heart of His forefather David, in this regard. He also trusted in the sovereignty and timing of God, and refused to take matters in his own hands to promote himself (I Sam. 26).

Jesus "ordered (for Himself) under" to His parents, and His situation in life, for the next 18 years! He chose to trust the counsel of God, to honor His father and mother, rather than rebel against them. The Bible says that this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth (Eph. 6:2,3). The reason is that, generally, parents understand more about life than we do, and they often understand *us*, our strengths and weaknesses, better than we perceive ourselves, too. The counsel they give is usually meant to help us succeed in life, not to set us up for disaster. The word usually translated as "continued to be subject" means that Jesus chose to arrange His life under their counsel and direction. This was a voluntary, intentional decision on His part. He trusted that God would work through the situation at home, and was content to do His best in that environment. He gave Himself to studying carpentry, and became "*the carpenter*" of Nazareth (Mk. 6:3), honorably following in the footsteps of His earthly father (Matt. 13:55). This does not mean He gave up His study of the Law, or His theological musings. He had to limit them to the time and situation available to Him as a carpenter. He became intensely practical, rooting His life deep in prayer, developing deep patience and compassion, and crystallizing His teachings in parables that even the simplest could benefit from. In the end, He was *nothing like* what the rabbinic schools of His day were turning out. This was apparent to all. He taught with insight, compassion and authority *like no one else*.