



## Jesus: A Life: Week 1

### Jesus' Early Life

**Big Idea:** We have hope because the Son of God came as a man and lived as a man to save men and women like you and me.

**Read the Bible:**

Luke 1-2

### **STUDY**

\*\*\* Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. \*\*\*

H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



## **Summary**

Jesus' early years are often the subject of great speculation. This is not without warrant because we don't have a lot of information about the early years of Christ, we have next to nothing actually. The little information we do have comes from this account in Luke 2 of Jesus' infancy and adolescent years. These two accounts are all we have between Christ's birth and the beginning of his ministry 30 years later.

The first scene takes place in the temple. Luke is merging two rituals into the telling of one story. After the birth of a Hebrew child the mother was made ritually unclean, 33 days for a boy and 66 days for a girl. At the end of that period the mother was to make a sacrifice to atone for uncleanliness and worship the Lord. Mary and Joseph's offering shows the financial state. They were unable to offer the traditional lamb for the offering so they brought the poor person's gift of two pigeons. Additionally, the first-born son was to be presented in the temple as a devotion to the Lord. It seems Luke is combining these rituals.

Upon entering the temple, they are greeted by Simeon, a devout worshiper who was filled with the Holy Spirit. The text does not say, but we can assume he is an old man by the tone of the passage. Simeon had been told by God that he would not pass away until he laid eyes on God's anointed Messiah. That moment has finally come. As Christ enters the temple Simeon is filled with the Spirit and worships God for bringing his salvation to all people. The fun doesn't stop there though. Moments later another aged worshiper comes into the room and begins prophesying about the Messiah before her.

It is worth noting that two of the first worshipers of Christ were aged believers. As a Multi-generational church we must take note of this. Every generation has a responsibility in God's Kingdom to praise the King and point people to the king.

One thing that is obvious from this text is the purpose of Christ. Even as a baby his purpose is clear to people looking on. He has come to save. Jesus has not come to perform miracles, though he would. Jesus has not come to heal the sick, though he would. Jesus has come, primarily, to seek and save the lost.

The next scene from Christ's adolescence comes when he is on the verge of cultural manhood. Christ is attending the Passover festival in Jerusalem with his parents. Imagine how impactful this ceremony would have been for the young Christ. As he viewed the



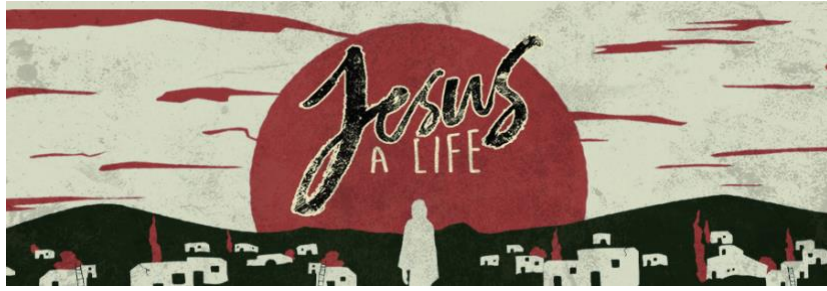
sacrificial Passover lambs at a young age it would have started to dawn on him that this ritual was actually pointing to the sacrifice, he would make one day.

As the celebration concluded, his parents returned home leaving him behind in Jerusalem. It would not have been all that difficult to be left behind at this point for Christ. The travel home would have separated the men and the women and children. So Joseph probably assumed that Jesus, as close to manhood as he was, was traveling with the children. Likewise, Mary would have concluded, that Jesus, as close to manhood as he was, was traveling with the men. Days pass before the parents realize their oversight.

Returning to Jerusalem the couple find Jesus in the temple teaching and questioning and all who hear the young boy are amazed at his answers. After a mild rebuke by his parents, Jesus is astonished that they did not know where he would be. After all, shouldn't the son of God be in his Father's house? Nevertheless, scripture tells us that Jesus went with Mary and Joseph and was submissive to them, growing and maturing until his time came to begin ministering.

Luke here is drawing out two distinct elements in Christ's nature. Jesus understands that he is divine, fully God. Thus, he calls himself the Son of God. Luke also wants us to see that Jesus is fully human. Thus, he was obedient to parents and grew and matured in his human nature.

We cannot overstate the importance of what Luke is showing us. Jesus is fully human and fully God. This gives us hope because the Son of God came as a man and lived as a man so that he could save men and women like you and me.



## **Leading Your Group**

**Community Time – Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.**

### **Bible Study**

\*\*\*Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. \*\*\*

**Start Group by Reading Luke 2:22-52 (Split the Reading among the Group)**

### **Major Lessons – (These are the “Lesson Points” in Class)**

1. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine in one body.

This is traditionally called the doctrine of the incarnation. It is, perhaps, the most pivotal doctrine in the Christian faith as it makes our salvation by God possible.

2. Jesus’ purpose is clear from the very beginning of His life. He was born to save us.

Christ has come to die on a cross. The cross was not a hitch in the plan. It was God’s plan.

3. Every generation has a place in the Kingdom of God.

**Discuss** (The following questions are meant as suggested questions to guide conversation.)

1. How does this story about Christ’s adolescence give us hope?
2. What do you think it means that Jesus grew in “wisdom and stature”?
3. How do you think Christ became aware of his true identity?
4. Why is it significant that two of the first worshipers of Christ were older?
5. Do you ever think about how Jesus’ primary purpose was to die on a cross and be raised again?



## Resources

### Expositor's Bible Commentary

#### 1. *Presentation of Jesus in the temple (2:21–40)*

**21–24** It is important to understand the sequence and background of these events. According to Jewish law a woman became ceremonially unclean on the birth of a child. On the eighth day the child was circumcised (cf. 1:59; Gen 17:12), after which the mother was unclean an additional thirty-three days—sixty-six if the child was female (Lev 12:1–5). At the conclusion of this period, the mother offered a sacrifice, either a lamb or, if she was poor, two doves or two young pigeons (Lev 12:6–8). In addition, the first son was to be presented to the Lord and then, so to speak, bought back with an offering (Num 18:15; cf. 1 Sam 1:24–28, where Hannah actually gives up Samuel to the Lord).

Luke, conflating the performance of these OT obligations into this single narrative, shows how Jesus was reared in conformity with them. His parents obeyed the lord (1:31) in naming him. The offering of birds instead of a lamb shows that he was born into a poor family. Perhaps this helped him identify with the poor of the land (cf. 6:20).

**25** In vv. 25–38 Luke presents two pious figures who, under divine inspiration, testify to the significance of Jesus. Once again Luke assures us of the credentials of Jesus as Messiah, taking care to show that each witness is an authentic representative of Judaism.

“Now” represents the attention-getting word *idou* (“behold”). Luke neither associates Simeon with a leading sect or party nor calls him a priest. The important thing is that he is “righteous and devout” (cf. Zechariah and Elizabeth, 1:6). He could be described as one of the believing remnant of Judaism, looking forward to the Messianic Age in its spiritual aspect. It is appropriate that the Spirit who is the Consoler (cf. Notes) was upon one who awaited the consolation.

**26–28** The same Spirit had revealed to Simeon (v. 26) that the Messiah (“the Lord’s Christ”) would come before Simeon died. This may, but need not necessarily, imply that he was an old man.

Mary and Joseph are referred to as Jesus’ “parents” (v. 27) and as “the child’s father and mother” (v. 33). Jesus would have been considered Joseph’s own son; so Luke’s terminology is not inconsistent. In the genealogy, however, the particulars of the relationship had to be made



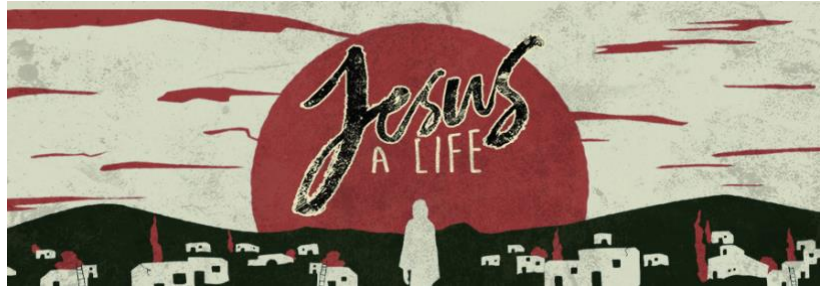
more explicit (3:23). Here, as in v. 38, Luke notes the providential timing, as the Spirit brings Simeon to the temple courts to be ready for the family's arrival. In this touching scene, Luke again shows the presence of Jesus, now in Simeon's arms (v. 28), as an occasion of praise (*eulogeō*) to God. Actually, the word is "blessed," the same as in v. 34.

**29–32** Simeon's psalm begins with the word *nun* ("now"), emphasizing the fact that the Messiah has indeed come (hence the Latin title *Nunc Dimittis* ["Now Dismiss"]). "Dismiss" (*apolyō*) here means allow to die (BAG, s.v.; cf. Num 20:29 LXX). NIV loses the emphasis of the Greek word order because it reverses the phrases. Nevertheless it does retain the words "in peace" in their place of final emphasis (cf. 1:79; 2:14). On "as you promised," see comment on v. 15. Note the contrast between "Sovereign Lord" and "servant." God's servant is now ready for his final order—to depart in death (of Gen 15:15 LXX; Num 20:29)—because he has indeed seen the "Lord's Christ" (v. 26).

Simeon does not say, however, that he has seen the Messiah but rather that his eyes have seen God's salvation (v. 30). To see Jesus is to see salvation embodied in him, a theme already noted as prominent in Luke (cf. comments on 1:69, 71, 77; and on 19:9). Luke's concern for the universal application of the gospel finds support in the words "in the sight of all people" (v. 31). Verse 31 echoes Isaiah 52:10 and Psalm 98:3. The parallel structure in v. 32 may involve a detailed contrast as well as a larger one. That is, not only are Gentiles and Jews put in contrast, but the same light (Isa 49:6) that brings "revelation" to pagans (cf. 1:78–79) brings "glory" to Israel (of 1:77). Note also "all people" (v. 31) and "your people" (v. 32; cf. comments on 1:77).

**33–35** In spite of what they already know, Joseph and Mary are amazed (v. 33; cf. comment on v. 17) at Simeon's song. Moreover, in it a somber note is sounded. In vivid language Simeon predicts that because of the child "many in Israel" (v. 34) would be brought to moral decision, some to a point of collapse (*ptōsis*; NIV, "falling") and others to what can well be called a resurrection (*anastasis*; NIV, "rising"). Some think there is but one group that falls and then rises (Marshall, *Luke, Historian and Theologian*, p. 122). But there will be a cost to Jesus. As the one who himself is the ultimate "sign," the visible affirmation of God's declared intentions he will be vulnerable to the hostility of unbelievers. A negative attitude toward him however, serves to brand the unbeliever as one who has rejected not only him but the whole of God's revelation (v. 35; cf. John 5:45–47). This clash will inevitably wound Jesus' mother.

**36–38** Luke's attention to the renewal of prophecy at the coming of the Messianic Age continues with the introduction of Anna as a "prophetess" (v. 36). Zechariah had been "filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied" (1:67). Simeon, though not called a prophet, was filled with the Spirit and also prophesied. Prophetesses functioned in both OT and NT times (Exod



15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh 6:14; Isa 8:3; Acts 2:17; 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5). Apparently Anna could trace her genealogy; and, though the tribe of Asher was not outstanding (Gen 30:12–13; 35:26), Luke considered it important to show her true Jewishness. She was a familiar figure at the temple. Possibly she lived in one of the rooms surrounding the temple precinct; or she may have, like the disciples in 24:53, centered her life there. She was the ideal widow (v. 37) described in 1 Timothy 5:5. Once more Luke points out the providential timing (v. 38; cf. v. 27). He may be underlining the desire for the messianic deliverance of Jerusalem (cf. Isa 52:9) by describing Anna’s thanksgiving with a rare verb (*anthōmologeomai*), which occurs in a psalm lamenting the defilement of the Jerusalem temple (Ps 79:13 [78:13 LXX]). Later Luke will mention another pious Jew who had been expecting the messianic kingdom, Joseph of Arimathea (23:51).

**39–40** Luke takes another opportunity to mention the fidelity of Jesus’ parents to the Jewish law as he continues the narrative (v. 39). He omits mention of the flight to Egypt. It is important to Matthew, providing another example of fulfilled prophecy (Matt 2:13–15); but this is not so significant at this point in Luke. What is significant is that Jesus’ parents were faithful to the Jewish law and that the child grew normally, the object of God’s grace (v. 40; cf. v. 52).<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The boy Jesus at the temple* (2:41–52)

This section provides the only account of Jesus’ boyhood we possess apart from apocryphal legends. The focal point is not his precocious wisdom, noteworthy as that was. Rather, Luke leads us to the real climax, Jesus’ reference to God as “my Father” (v. 49). This is the first instance of Jesus’ “filial consciousness,” his awareness that in a unique way he was the Son of God.

**41–42** Luke takes yet another opportunity to emphasize the fidelity of Jesus’ family to Judaism. Adults were supposed to attend the three major feasts in Jerusalem annually—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. For many this was impossible, but an effort was made to go at least to Passover. With puberty, a boy became a “son of the covenant,” a custom continued in the present bar-mitzvah ceremony. It was considered helpful for a boy to attend the Jerusalem

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<sup>1</sup> Liefeld, W. L. (1984). [Luke](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 848–850). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.



festivals for a year or two before becoming a son of the covenant so that he would realize what his new relationship involved. Luke calls Jesus a “boy” (*pais*, a term also used for servanthood, v. 43) in contrast to “child” (*paidion*, v. 40).

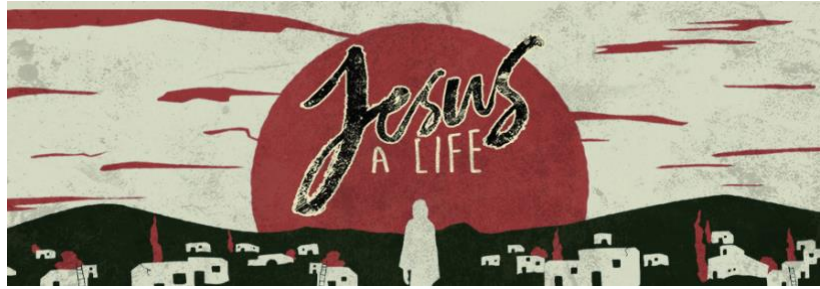
**43–47** At this intermediate age, Jesus might have been either with the women and children or with the men and older boys, if the families were grouped this way in the caravan. Each parent might have supposed he was with the other (v. 43). We need not assume that his parents neglected him. It was after a day of travel that they missed Jesus (v. 44); another day would have been required for the trip back (v. 45), and on the next day (“after three days,” v. 46) the successful search was made.

The questions Jesus put to the teachers (v. 46) were probably not merely boyish inquiries but the kind of probing questions used in ancient academies and similar discussions. He also gave answers (v. 47). J.W. Doeve suggests that Jesus engaged in a midrashic discussion of biblical texts: “Their amazement must relate to his deducing things from Scripture which they had never found before” (*Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 4], p. 105).

**48** Luke vividly describes the parents’ emotions. The first is astonishment (cf. v. 33). There is no inconsistency or lapse in Luke’s attributing surprise to those who should have known best the uniqueness of Jesus’ person and mission. It is one of the characteristics of Luke to observe the various responses of awe at the words and deeds of Jesus, which is also consistent with ancient narratives touching on the observation of wonders. His mother’s natural concern then issues very humanly in a hint of scolding. Next she uses the word “anxiously” (the participle *odynōmenoi*) to describe her and Joseph’s feelings as they hunted for him. The word is unusually strong, often indicating pain or suffering (16:24–25; Acts 20:38; cf. TDNT, 5:115).

**49–50** Jesus’ answer, “Why were you searching for me?” (v. 49), pointedly prepares the hearer for a significant statement that is then understood as being theologically inevitable. The same pattern occurs in 24:5: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” followed by “He is not here; he has risen!” (24:6). In the present instance, the second part of the statement is of extraordinary significance. The importance of Jesus’ use of the phrase “my Father,” with its implied designation of himself as the unique Son of the Father, is heightened not only by the preceding question but by the subsequent statement of v. 50. By saying that Mary and Joseph did not understand, Luke underlines the awesome mystery of Jesus’ statement of filial consciousness. There may also be, though it is doubtful, a subtle contrast between the words “your father” (v. 48) and “my Father” (v. 49).





**51** Immediately following this intimation of Jesus' divinity, Luke assures us also of his perfect humanity by noting his obedience to his parents. Once more Mary reflects inwardly on the significance of it all (cf. Gen 37:11). Like the boy Samuel (1 Sam 2:26) and the responsible son in Proverbs 3:4, Jesus matures into a person both God and men approve.

**52** Jesus' growth was normal. Unlike some stories in the apocryphal gospels, Luke does not try to portray Jesus as exhibiting unusual powers. To say Jesus "grew in wisdom" does not detract from his deity. Even if wisdom means innate knowledge, Philippians 2:7 suggests that as a servant Jesus was willing to forgo the full use of his divine powers; so a normal development of knowledge is not ruled out. "Stature" (*hēlikia*) is ambiguous, referring either to physical growth or, more likely, personal development, i.e., maturity. The good reputation Jesus enjoyed "with men" was continued in the church (Acts 2:47).<sup>2</sup>

## **Reading the New Testament**

(Luke 2:21–52)

Luke 2:21–52 is the second large unit in 2:1–52, the half of episode two (1:57–2:52) focusing on Jesus' birth and early life. The events of vv. 21–52 are joined by the theme of obedience to the Jewish law and certain pious customs of the Jews. (1) Luke 2:21 describes Jesus' circumcision on the eighth day in obedience to Leviticus 12:3. (2) Luke 2:22–24 telescopes at least two traditional Jewish practices prescribed by the law. Verses 22a, 24 reflect the practice of the purification of the mother after childbirth, following the directives of Leviticus 12:6, 8. That Jesus' mother offered birds for her purification indicates she was poor (cf. Lev 12:8): Jesus came from the poor. Verses 22b, 23, however, echo Exodus 13:2, 12, 13, 15 where it is said the firstborn belongs to God and must be redeemed (cf. Mishna, *Bekhoroth*, 8). The actions of Jesus' parents at this point are "according to the custom of the law" (2:27): "And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee" (2:39). (3) Luke 2:41 says Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. This was doubtless in obedience to Exodus 23:14–17; 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16, which specified

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<sup>2</sup> Liefeld, W. L. (1984). [Luke](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 851–852). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.



that every male was to go to Jerusalem at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles each year. Though the law said nothing about women, some apparently made the pilgrimage in biblical times (1 Sam 1:7; 2:19) and Hillel prescribed that they also should go to Passover. (4) Luke 2:42 indicates that Jesus' trip to Jerusalem was according to custom. This was probably in preparation for his entrance into religious responsibility that, according to *Pirke Aboth* 5:21, came at age thirteen. (5) Luke 2:51 says Jesus "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them." The boy Jesus fulfilled the commandment to honor one's father and mother (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). In 2:21–52 the evangelist depicts both Jesus' parents and the young Jesus as obedient to the prescriptions of the law: this thread ties the section together.

The thread of obedience to the law is also theologically important in 2:21–52. Jesus, who as a boy was obedient to the law, came from a family for whom obedience was an unargued assumption of life. In this, Jesus' family fulfilled the Jewish ideal that believed the family's functions to include propagating the race, satisfying emotional needs in beneficent ways, and perpetuating religious experience. The third function was stated in a proverb: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). It was in a family whose unargued assumption was obedience to the law that Jesus at twelve was depicted as taking on himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven (v. 42). His subsequent obedience to his parents (v. 51) came from a desire consciously committed to do God's will (Eph 6:2–3).

As part of the general context of the obedience by the family of Jesus to the law, we note that the model disciple, Mary, dedicates her child to God. Luke 2:22–24 falls into an ABB'A' pattern: vv. 22a and 24 (cf. Lev 12:8), which deal with the purification of the mother after childbirth, being A and A'; vv. 22b and 23, which deal with the redemption of the firstborn, being B and B'. The prescription of Exodus 13:2 concerning the firstborn son was literally fulfilled in the case of Jesus, the firstborn (Luke 2:7), who was not ransomed (Exod 13:13; Num 3:47; 18:16). Contrary to normal custom, Jesus was dedicated to God and remained his property (Reicke, 100). Early Christian art demonstrates that Gentile Christians were aware of the OT law regarding the redemption of the firstborn and that they devoted significant energy to reflection on the matter (Hornik and Parsons, 33, n. 10). The closest parallel to this emphasis is found in 1 Samuel 1–2, where Hannah gives Samuel, at his birth, to the Lord for as long as the child lives. Consequently, Samuel lives in the presence of Eli at the tent of meeting. If Jesus, in a similar manner, was dedicated to God and not redeemed, he belonged to God permanently. This would explain the reason Jesus would not understand why his parents did not know where to find him in Jerusalem (2:48–49): since he was God's he could be expected to be in his Father's house, as in the case of Samuel. At the plot level of the narrative, the boy Jesus made a



personal identification with the decisions his parents had made about him at his birth. In 2:21–52, family influence and personal decision combined to make the young Jesus what he was.

Luke’s twelve-year-old Jesus was not only obedient to God’s will, he was also possessed of spiritual discernment beyond what was normal. The story in 2:41–51 about Jesus in the temple depicts the lad as God’s Son (v. 49) who is characterized by unusual wisdom in understanding the law. The story is enclosed within an inclusion that speaks about Jesus’ wisdom (2:40 and 2:52; cf. Sir 45:1), the centerpiece of its concentric surface structure (de Jonge).

- A Mary, Joseph, and Jesus go to Jerusalem (41–42)
  - B Jesus stays in Jerusalem, which is not noticed (43)
    - C His parents seek and find him (44–46a)
      - D Jesus among the teachers (46–47)
        - C’ His parents, annoyed, reproach him (48)
          - B’ Jesus’ reaction, which is not understood (49–50)
            - A’ Mary, Joseph, and Jesus return to Nazareth (51a)

The centerpiece and the frame agree: Jesus is the wise one. In antiquity it was a convention to depict a significant figure as a child prodigy (e.g., Moses [Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.20–24]; Samuel [Josephus, *Antiquities* 5.348]; Solomon [LXX 1 Kgs 2:12]; Epicurus [Diogenes Laertius 10.14]). The story portrays Jesus as God’s Son who is the wise interpreter of Scripture. This is a motif found elsewhere in the narrative of Luke-Acts (e.g., Luke 4:1–13; 4:16–21; 7:26–27; 10:25–28; 20:17–18; 20:37–38; 20:41–44; 24:25–27, 32; 24:44–47). Especially important is Luke 24 where the evangelist depicts the risen Christ as the one who interprets Scripture for the disciples and opens their minds to understand its meaning.

Luke’s portrayal of the youthful Jesus as a person of unusual discernment, within a section that emphasizes the obedience of both Jesus’ family and the lad, is theologically significant. Religious understanding, insight into God’s will, develops in the context of religious submission and obedience. The Johannine Jesus says, “If any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority” (John 7:17). This statement can be expanded into a general rule of thumb: the discernment of spiritual truth—God’s will—comes only after a willingness to do it, if and when it is known. In the realm of spiritual insight—including an understanding of the religious significance of Scripture—one does not know God’s will and then decide whether to do it. Rather one wills to be obedient to God’s will first and then, and only then, discerns what it is. Jesus, who as a youth was a precocious interpreter of Scripture (God’s will), was such only within the context of a conscious acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and a personal identification with his parents’ dedication of him to God as a baby: discernment followed commitment.



The way the evangelist has spoken about Jesus as a youth is only possible for one who assumes the real humanity of Jesus. (1) “And the child grew and became strong” (v. 40a); “Jesus increased in stature” (v. 52—cf. 19:3, where the term is used of Zacchaeus who is small of stature). This is the way one talks about someone who has a human body; Hebrews 2:14 puts it this way: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature.” In Christian history the tendency to deny the truly human body of Jesus has been called Gnosticism. (2) “And Jesus increased [made progress] in wisdom” (v. 52). This is the way one talks about someone who has a truly human mind. Hebrews implies the same thing: “Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect” (2:17); “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning” (4:15). Since there is no way Jesus could have been tempted as we are unless he had limited knowledge within the confines of a human mind, as we do, Hebrews joins Luke in affirming Jesus’ humanity in the mental sphere. In Christian history the tendency to deny the truly human mind of Jesus has been called Apollinarianism, after Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea (c. AD 390), who held that Jesus had the body and soul of a man but that the reasoning mind in him was the eternal Logos. (3) “Jesus increased in favor with God and other humans” (v. 52). This is the type of language one uses for someone who develops both religiously and socially. Hebrews speaks of the same reality: he was made “perfect through suffering” (2:10); “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered” (5:8). This, moreover, is something Jesus shared with Samuel: 1 Samuel 2:26 reads, “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with other humans.” It was Marcion in church history who said Christ appeared in Palestine a full-grown man. For Luke, Jesus grew and developed—in body, in mind, religiously, and socially. Jesus is truly human. Only thereby can he be the pioneer of salvation, a legitimate model of Christian existence.<sup>3</sup>

## **Holman Concise Bible Commentary**

### **JESUS’ BIRTH (2:1–52)**

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<sup>3</sup> Talbert, C. H. (2002). [\*Reading Luke: a literary and theological commentary on the third Gospel\*](#) (Rev. ed., pp. 37–40). Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing.



Jesus' birth took place in humble circumstances, but all the figures surrounding His birth were pious and responsive to the hope of God. Jesus was praised by a priest, by a humble virgin, by shepherds, and by a prophet and prophetess at the temple. All reflect high expectation from people who are portrayed as walking with God. Only the word of Simeon to Mary gives an ominous ring. The old man noted that Jesus would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to ... Israel." In fact, Jesus would be a cause of grief for Mary and division in Israel. Jesus is the "salvation" of God, but in the midst of hope is the reality that fulfillment comes mixed with pain and suffering.

Jesus' own self-awareness concludes the introductory overture in the Gospel. Here the young boy declares that He must be about the work of His father in the temple. Jesus notes His unique relationship to God and His association with God's presence and teaching.

This section, dominated by Old Testament allusions, opens the Gospel with notes of fulfillment and indications of God's direction. These emphases continue through the entire Gospel. John and Jesus are placed side by side in the stories of Luke 1, and then Jesus has the stage in Luke 2. The structure imitates the theology of forerunner-fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bock, D. L. (1998). [Luke](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 450). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.