

The Gospel According to Luke

“Take Me Out To The... Temple” Chapter 2:21-51

Introduction

By the time He was twelve years old, Jesus had accompanied Joseph and Mary to the Temple at Jerusalem at least thirteen times – once when He was forty days old, and then once each year for the next twelve years.

It is remarkable because children were not required to go there at all:

1. Mary was required by Jewish religious law to “[present \[Jesus\] to the Lord](#)” and “[offer a sacrifice](#)” forty days after His birth; but these rituals did not require the baby be present.
2. Jewish men were required to make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the “[Feast of the Passover](#)”; but their wives and children need not accompany them.

After eight days, Jesus was circumcised according to Jewish law; after forty days He was presented and His mother purified according to Jewish law; and once a year His step-dad, Joseph, made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover according to Jewish law – taking the whole family with him.

We can conclude at least two things from these observations:

1. Joseph and Mary were eager to perform everything required of them by the letter of the Jewish law.
2. Joseph and Mary were excited to promote the spirit of the Jewish law.

In other words, these events were more than religious rituals in their family. They approached them in ways that spoke of their relationship to God. They didn’t just pay attention to the calendar; they saw these days as opportunities to celebrate.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Your Parenting Can Furnish A Spiritual Background For Your Kids, and #2 Your Kids Can Find Their Spiritual Business From Your Parenting.

#1 Your Parenting Can Furnish
A Spiritual Background For Your Kids
(v21-38)

These verses were not written primarily as a text on parenting. Their primary meaning is to establish that Jesus Christ perfectly kept God's law His entire life. As an infant, He was circumcised according to the law; He was presented and His mother was purified according to the law; and His step-dad kept the pilgrimage required by the law.

This may not seem all that important, but it is critical to your salvation. Jesus came to take your place, to die in your place, as your Substitute on the Cross at Calvary. His death is only applicable if He was sinless His entire life and if He perfectly kept and fulfilled all the requirements of God's law. This short summary of Jesus' childhood established that He did, in fact, keep and fulfill the law of God to the letter.

Jesus kept and fulfilled the law of God as an infant and then as a child by the obedience of Joseph and Mary. All it would have taken to short-circuit things would have been for them to fail to circumcise Jesus on the eighth day, or miss one of the other important observances. They didn't, and we can learn some things from them to help us in parenting our own kids.

[Luke 2:21](#) And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Joseph and Mary were still in Bethlehem. In all likelihood they were at Joseph's ancestral home, and a local priest performed the ceremony.

Jewish boys were circumcised and given their name on the eighth day of their life. It was more than customary; it was commanded. Joseph and Mary saw to it that Jesus was circumcised and named according to the law.

Physical circumcision means nothing today from a religious standpoint. It is strictly a medical decision. Circumcision in any event always symbolized a spiritual commitment to be separated to God by cutting away the flesh. By “flesh” the Bible means our physical appetites and drives, and especially our inclinations to indulge them for selfish reasons.

Your kids – girls as well as boys – still need spiritual circumcision. You must understand that they were born with a sin nature. They need above everything else to be evangelized.

Luke 2:22 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord
Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD*”),
Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “*A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*”

Two different things were going on here: *Presentation* and *purification*. We think of presentation in terms of a baby dedication or an infant baptism. It was something quite different. This was a ceremony paying the Lord a ransom for your son. He had to be redeemed from the Lord as if he were a slave. It reminded the Jews that God had redeemed them from Egypt by the slaying of the Passover lambs and, as a result, they belonged to God.

Your kids really do belong to God. Since they are His, on loan to you, you’ll want to redeem the time you have with them by raising them in a manner pleasing to God. It seems obvious; but it requires real commitment.

Purification was a separate thing. For forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was ceremonially unclean and could not enter the temple. The offering, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,” was prescribed for those who were poor. Joseph and Mary had little from a material standpoint, but their lives were rich in spiritual things.

Purification reminded the parents that they, too, were sinners in need of cleansing. How do we get clean? Through obedience and confession:

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Luke presented Joseph and Mary as godly parents. They kept the letter of God's law – going through the required rituals according to the proper schedule.

Some people think it would be easier if we had similar requirements! Churches adopt certain rituals, like infant baptism or dedication; first holy confession; confirmation. The Bible prescribes no such rituals. We've been set free to enjoy a more personal, intimate relationship with God. Thus we don't have to read our Bibles... Or attend Church... **We want to! We get to!**

A relationship with Jesus does what no ritual can – it fills our mind and heart with love for Him to direct our every desire and decision. When relationship, not ritual, is our foundation, we raise our kids in an atmosphere of *enjoying* God rather than *enduring* Him.

Two remarkable saints were sent by God to the Temple, Simeon and Anna.

Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Luke 2:27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law,

Luke 2:28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

Luke 2:29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word;

Luke 2:30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation

Luke 2:31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

Luke 2:32 A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

"The Consolation of Israel" was another name for the "Christ," the Messiah. Somehow it had been "revealed" to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. It may have been a prophecy

spoken to him by someone; perhaps Anna, who we will meet in a moment. Or it may have been given directly to him by God.

One day the Holy Spirit prompted him to beat feet over to the Temple. There he saw Jesus and declared Him to be “salvation” to “all peoples,” “Gentiles” and “Jews” alike.

I again remind you that it was not necessary, not required, that Joseph and Mary bring Jesus with them for the presentation and purification. But because they did, something amazing occurred in their lives, in Simeon’s life, and in our lives as we read the account.

Simeon lived with a constant expectation he would come to the Temple and see Jesus. Do you come to fellowship each time expecting to see Jesus?

Luke 2:33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.

Luke 2:34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against

Luke 2:35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

OK... That put a different spin on things! Simeon’s words about the “fall and rising” can be interpreted either of two ways:

1. A person must “fall” in humility before Jesus before they can “rise” and experience spiritual life; or,
2. Jesus will divide people into two groups: Those who reject Him and “fall,” and those who receive Him and “rise.”

Both are true! You are called upon to fall before Jesus as your Savior and Lord. When you do, you are raised-up with spiritual life. If you refuse and reject Jesus, you are left in your fallen condition to face judgment for your sins. “The thoughts of many hearts” are “revealed” whenever Jesus is preached.

Simeon had a personal word for Mary. She would suffer – as if a “sword” was “[piercing] through [her] own soul.” In a strange way, this

would be a comfort to Mary. You might as well know that suffering is coming!

Luke 2:36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

Luke 2:37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Luke 2:38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The phrase “of a great age” used in conjunction with the other numbers seems to indicate she was much older than eighty-four. She may have been a widow for eighty-four years, making her well over one hundred years old. Having lost her husband, she did not remarry but spent her time in the Temple, fasting and praying. She, too, prophesied over the baby Jesus and added her testimony to Simeon’s. The priests and people would have taken heed to these two witnesses.

Anna “[came] in that instant.” God orchestrated this beautiful drama. Godly parents brought their baby, even though not required. Both Simeon and Anna were prompted by the Holy Spirit to come just at that moment. God released His power through their spiritual gifts.

Joseph and Mary’s parenting furnished Jesus a rich spiritual background. They did it by keeping the letter of the law, but in the spirit of the law. It wasn’t just ritual to them; it was relationship.

The disciplines of your Christian life – Bible reading, prayer, Church attendance – can be rituals or a relationship. If they are mere rituals, your kids will suffer for it. If they are part of your relationship, you will provide a rich spiritual background for your kids, a foundation for them to build upon.

#2 Your Kids Can Find Their Spiritual Business From Your Parenting (v39-51)

Let’s agree that Jesus was altogether unique as a child. Still, He was a human child, and we can learn from His example.

Luke 2:39 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth.

Luke 2:40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Jesus' first miracle would be turning water into wine at a wedding when He was thirty; so we conclude nothing remarkable occurred during His childhood. The description given of His early years provide a framework for parenting your own kids on a day-by-day basis:

1. You want your child to “[grow]” physically, but to also “[become] strong in spirit.” You’re to feed them both physical food and spiritual food; you’re to exercise them both physically and spiritually.
2. You want your child to be “filled with wisdom.” Not just knowledge, even of the Bible, but “wisdom.” You want them to think about life from a heavenly, eternal perspective – using the Bible as the source of true wisdom and knowledge.
3. You want your child to have “the grace of God... upon him.” You must model before him or her a life of joy in knowing and serving God. Emphasize grace, what God has done for you, rather than works, what you must do for God.

Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

Luke 2:42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.

Luke 2:43 When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*;

Luke 2:44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances.

Luke 2:45 So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

Joseph wisely took his entire family with him every year to the Feast of the Passover. It speaks volumes about his husbanding and parenting.

The “custom of the feast” was to stay for a week. Then they started back on the three-day journey. They no doubt traveled with a large group of family or friends. They assumed Jesus was with another

group in their little caravan. When they camped for the night, Jesus was nowhere to be found. His anxious parents returned to find Him.

Luke 2:46 Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

They had traveled one day; it took another day to return; on the third day they found Him. He had never left the Temple! The “teachers” of Jewish law would sit around asking difficult questions of one another, then working out answers that seemed biblical.

Luke 2:47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

This is remarkable because Jesus was not using His divine powers and attributes. He had not entered into His public ministry. He was able to hold His own as a human, twelve year old, among the great teachers of the Jews.

You should expect more from your kids spiritually!

Luke 2:48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”

“Amazed,” but still anxious. Even spiritual kids can cause you anxiety as you wonder what is going on, where they are headed.

Luke 2:49 And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”

These are the first recorded words of Jesus. He was twelve; at age thirteen He would be considered a full, adult member of the Jewish community. Bar mitvah would not be a custom for some time. Instead, the Jews would call a thirteen year old a “son of the commandment,” signifying that he was a full member of the synagogue. Jesus knew He was more than that; He was the Son of God in a unique way that allowed Him to call God His “Father.”

If you believe in Jesus, **you** become a child of God and can call Him “**Father.**” Your kids need to see you are a child of God, not just a member of a Church.

Luke 2:50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Luke 2:51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

More good parenting advice:

1. You want your child to “**increase in wisdom.**” You need to establish a consistent pattern of exposure to the Bible.
2. You want your child to “**increase in... stature.**” “**Stature**” can mean *maturity*. This probably has more to do with the things we consider more mundane, like socialization and schooling. But even these must be saturated with spiritual things.
3. You want your child to “**increase in... favor with God and men.**” The word for “**favor**” is a derivative of *grace*. The idea here seems to be that your child grows to understand he or she is to grace God and men by selflessly serving them.

Jesus wanted to be about His Father’s “**business.**” Your kids need to discover what God’s “**business**” is for their lives. It doesn’t mean they are all called to be *missionaries* or *ministers* as careers. It does mean that they choose the career God has planned for them, and that in whatever career they choose, they selflessly serve God as His ministers and missionaries.

Conclusion

Jesus perfectly kept God’s law, even as an infant and a child. He satisfied and fulfilled all that God’s law commanded and demanded. When He took your place on the Cross, the law of God that declares you a guilty sinner was abolished. You are instead declared righteous and are saved by grace through faith.

If or when you are a parent, you have the responsibility of passing-on these truths to your kids. Do it with joy and enjoyment.