

Introductory

This material is exclusive to Luke, and what we know about Jesus between His birth and His Baptism we know from this. In the TLH one-year lectionary, Luke 2: 41-54 is appointed to be read on Epiphany 2. That same text is appointed in the LW three-year lectionary to be read on The First Sunday After Christmas in Series C. This reading is read on every Christmas 2 in LSB.

Textual Notes

40. Using the general term for “child,” Luke tells us how “Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἠϋξανε καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πληρούμενον σοφία – the child was growing and becoming strong and being filled with wisdom.” The verb “αὐξάνω – to grow” is used like we would use it, to refer to plants and other living things growing, the Church growing numerically and otherwise, and learning things (Colossians 1:10).

Those two verbs are middle/passive, and the commentators who say that His growing is of a physical nature are of course not wrong, and there’s nothing profound about that. The focus of Luke appears to be on God here gaining knowledge about God. Do we not suppose that the omniscient (all-knowing) was being taught and learning from Mary and Joseph, and from others?

The word “κραταιόω – to strengthen” occurs only four times in the NT; here, earlier (1:80) to refer to the younger Jesus, and in 1 Corinthians (16:13) and Ephesians (3:16) to talk about Christians being strong or strengthened. Like the concept of growing or being grown, so the concept of being strong or being made strong in the middle/passive indicates that the person is receiving strength.

The present middle/passive participle that has Him being filled with wisdom likewise has Him receiving that wisdom from outside of self, and it indicates that Wisdom in the flesh is gaining more wisdom all the time, and He is, “καὶ χάρις Θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ’ αὐτό – and the blessing of God was upon Him,” as it had been on Mary (1:30) and would continue to be upon Him (2:52). Clearly.

41. Mary and Joseph show themselves to be devout, “Καὶ ἐπορεύοντο οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἔτος εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ τῇ ἑορτῇ τοῦ πάσχα – and his parents journeyed every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover.” Not everybody did. Luke doesn’t tell us if they went to Jerusalem, about ninety miles from Jerusalem, at other times as well, but we know that they did for Passover.

We also know that there was at least one – probably only one – synagogue in Nazareth, and it seems reasonable to assume that they were regulars. When talking last week about what it meant for Simeon to be “devout,” I talked about how some people came to church on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday – one guy came to last week’s Wednesday funeral – two times, one time, some none.

42. Fast forward to the adolescent boy, “Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἐτῶν δώδεκα, ἀναβαινόντων αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τῆς ἑορτῆς – and when he was twelve years old, they having gone up as was the custom to the feast,” and the commentators put forth the possibility that this is the first time Jesus has gone with to the Passover. The previous verse (41) talks about his parents going every year, not Him.

I suppose that’s not important, but it is important that He is there at the age of twelve, as the OT commanded (Exodus 23: 14-17, Deuteronomy 16:16). Luke goes from conception to birth to age eight days (circumcision) to forty days (presentation) to this. Those are the times in the life of Jesus he sees as being important. Matthew, Mark, and John give us nothing of that childhood.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges points out that,

This silence of the Evangelists is a proof of their simple faithfulness, and is in striking contrast with the blaze of foolish and dishonouring miracles with which the Apocryphal Gospels degrade the Divine Boyhood. See my *Life of Christ*, 1. 58–66. Meanwhile we are permitted to see (i) That our Lord never attended the schools of the Rabbis ([Mark 6:2](#); [John 6:42](#); [John 7:15](#)), and therefore that His teaching was absolutely original, and that He would therefore be regarded by the Rabbis as a ‘man of the people,’ or ‘unlearned person.’ (See [Acts 4:13](#); T. B. Berachôth, f. 47. 2; [Sir 38:24](#) fg.)

Perhaps the most well-known incident of made-up things about the young Jesus is the one that has Him making a board longer. That incident is found in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas*,

And Jesus reached the age of eight years. Joseph was a master builder, [\[1770\]](#) and used to make ploughs and ox-yokes. And one day a rich man said to Joseph: Master, make me a couch, both useful and beautiful. And Joseph was in distress, because the wood which he had brought [\[1771\]](#) for the work was too short. And Jesus said to him: Do not be annoyed. Take hold of this piece of wood by one end, and I by the other; I and let us draw it out. And they did so; and immediately he found it useful for that which he wished. And He said to Joseph: Behold, do the work which thou wishest. And Joseph, seeing what He had done, embraced Him, and said: Blessed am I, because God hath given me such a son.

The really good made-up stuff is found in the lesser-known *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*.

Ellicott very well and thoroughly treats the stages at various stages of life,

The stages of Jewish childhood were marked as follows:—At three the boy was weaned, and wore for the first time the fringed or tasselled garment prescribed by [Numbers 15:38-41](#), and [Deuteronomy 22:12](#). His education began, at first under the mother’s care. At five he was to learn the Law, at first by extracts written on scrolls

of the more important passages, the Shema or Creed of [Deuteronomy 2:4](#), the Hallel or Festival Psalms (Psalms 114-118, 136), and by catechetical teaching in school. At twelve he became more directly responsible for his obedience to the Law, and on the day when he attained the age of thirteen, put on for the first time the phylacteries which were worn at the recital of his daily prayer. (See Note on [Matthew 23:5](#).) It was accordingly an epoch of transition analogous to that which obtains among us at Confirmation. It was, therefore in strict accordance with usage, with perhaps a slight anticipation of the actual day, that the “child Jesus” should, at the age of twelve, have gone up with His parents to Jerusalem.

43. καὶ τελειωσάντων τὰς ἡμέρας, ἐν τῷ ὑποστρέφειν αὐτοὺς ὑπέμεινεν Ἰησοῦς ὁ παῖς ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ – and having completed the days (of the festival), in their returning, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem,” and we kind of know the drill, don’t we? He had travelled on previous trips with the women, but now He was a man, and a Home Alone reference is not inappropriate.

But “οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ - but His parents did not know.” This is the third time (2:27, 41) Luke has called Mary and Joseph the “γονεῖς – parents” of Jesus. The copyists don’t like that, and several manuscripts read “Ἰωσήφ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ - Joseph and His mother.” That’s not wrong, but if you believe that the “best” manuscripts are, then Luke thinks “parents” is okay too.

Luke knows how the conception of Jesus took place, and he has spent a lot of ink telling us about it, and we can presuppose that knowledge when we read the word “parents.” I for one have always found it a bit awkward to call Joseph the “foster father” or Jesus or some such thing. If you believe that Matthew was written first – I do – then they had his account as well of the Virgin Conception.

44. And what parent hasn’t had something like this happen to them, “νομίσαντες δὲ αὐτὸν εἶναι ἐν τῇ συνοδίᾳ ἦλθον ἡμέρας ὁδὸν – having supposed him to be in their group, they went a day journey.” The word “συνοδία” is where we get “synod.” Go ahead and tell of a time when you had something like this happen to you, only do it in such a way that you don’t look like bad parents.

I actually have come to think that Jesus at this age was pretty much able to take care of Himself. When I was that age, I was delivering newspapers every day, driving eighteen wheelers around the yard – backing up is the hard part – and walking all over the neighborhood with my homes, and I was a town boy. City boys and country boys these days are in many ways quite self-sufficient.

So it’s not that Jesus was in any great imminent danger. Mary and Joseph were just being parents, and they wanted to locate their child, “καὶ ἀνεζήτησαν αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς γνωστοῖς – and they began seeking Him among the relatives and the acquaintances” and they kept it up. The adjective “συγγενής – relative” is a general term, sort of like our word, and who are your relatives?

It’s the word used to describe the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth (1:36), and the people who (along with “περίουκος – neighbors” – different word) rejoiced with her (58) when John was

born. The other people they asked are “γνωστός,” people they knew. With whom do you travel, if you travel with people? They were asking anybody and everybody if they have seen their son.

45. When you lose a child, when do you stop looking for it? You don’t, that’s when, “καὶ μὴ εὐρόντες ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἀναζητοῦντες αὐτόν – and not finding Him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him.” When do you stop worrying about your child and imagining the worst possible case scenario for them? My father doesn’t worry about me – it’s a recent development.

46. You wonder where they went first to seek Him, “καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς εὗρον αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ – and after three days, they found Him in the Temple,” not the first place they looked. Or was it? Some actual scholars think that they travelled away from Jerusalem for one day – like it says – then back another day, and some even have another day looking for Him around camp.

When they found Him, “καθεζόμενον ἐν μέσῳ τῶν διδασκάλων καὶ ἀκούοντα αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπερωτῶντα αὐτούς – He was sitting in the middle of the teachers and hearing them and questioning them.” The body language would suggest that Jesus is the star of the show. He is sitting – the posture of teaching – and He is physically located in the midst of the teachers.

He is said to listen to those teachers and ask them questions, which is the way Classical Education takes place. One aspect of that methodology is catechesis, which has the teacher asking questions of the students and them shooting back rote answers. How interesting it must have been for all present to have God Himself there conversing with experts in Theology. Ellicott thinks,

The method of teaching was, we see, essentially and reciprocally catechetical. The kind of questions current in the schools would include such as, What is the great commandment of the Law? What may or may not be done on the Sabbath? How is such a precept to be paraphrased; what is its true meaning? As the Targum of Jonathan included the books of Joshua, Judges 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets, the questions may probably have turned also on the meaning of prophecies, the expectations of the Christ, and the like. The legends of the Apocryphal Gospels make the wisdom of the child Jesus take a wide range over astronomy and other sciences.

47. Not all teachers are the same, and as for Jesus, “ἐξίσταντο δὲ πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῇ συνέσει καὶ ταῖς ἀποκρίσεσιν αὐτοῦ – all hearing Him were amazed by His understanding and answers.” Probably we have all had a teacher like that, maybe more. I don’t have many physical “teachers” these days, but I will often listen to *The Great Courses* from *The Teaching Company*.

The word “ἐξίστημι – amazed” is used seventeen times in the NT, most often to describe reaction to a miracle of Jesus, here to describe a reaction to the teaching of Jesus. William Cronin is a university professor, and he’s really only written one book, *Nature’s Metropolis*, about the symbiotic relationship between Chicago and downstate and the rest of the agricultural Midwest.

I was amazed at the man's understanding of that relationship, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing today. Jerod Diamond is not a God-fearing man, but if you want to read somebody who understands the Natural Man, read his *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. We look at some of the teachings of Jesus recorded in the NT, and we can understand the amazement of these men!

The specific amazing thing mentioned by Luke is their His “σύνεσις – understanding” of the subject matter, presumably God. I know all about the Natural Man, and I know it well. I know Christian Theology and a few other things pretty well. The definition, “a putting together in the mind, hence: understanding, practical discernment, intellect” – Classical Education calls it Logic.

48. Don't you suppose His parents were surprised to see their boy teaching the theologians? Did not see that coming, “καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐξεπλάγησαν, καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ – and seeing Him, they were astonished, and His mother said to Him...” It means, "*strike out* of one's senses" (*BAGD*), i.e. with the *outcome* of being utterly amazed (dumbfounded)...left "at a loss."

I know that would have been my parents' response if they had seen me doing that at the age of twelve, and Mary goes all mother, saying “Τέκνον, τί ἐποίησας ἡμῖν οὕτως; ἰδοὺ ὁ πατήρ σου καὶ γὰρ ὀδυνώμενοι ζητοῦμέν σε – child, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I, stressing out, have been looking for you,” going from worrying to chewing out in one fell swoop.

49. I don't know, but do we detect a little bit of teen-aged know it all in, “καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς Τί ὅτι ἐζητεῖτέ με; οὐκ ᾔδειτε ὅτι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Πατρὸς μου δεῖ εἶναί με – and He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that it is necessary for me to be in My Father's House?’” First off, Mary had called Joseph “your father,” and Jesus corrects that.

Secondly, the word “business” is not in the text. The KJV and many of its descendants have “business” – and I can see why – but the modern translations correct that to “house.” In KJV times, your “business” was things that kept you busy, i.e. the things you did during the day. Here, we see Jesus busying Himself with one of the main things He does – He's teaching about God.

If you wanted to teach about God, you would do that in your local synagogue or the Temple in Jerusalem. People who know the blueprint of Temple and the customs of the day talk about various rooms – we could call them classrooms – where classes may at various times be taught, and the Bible has several accounts of people teaching in the court. Later, He will take it to the streets.

We are familiar with the Jesus who travels about hither and yon preaching and teaching, and there is plenty of that going on in the Gospels. Having written that, all four Evangelists, Matthew (26:55), Mark (12:35), later on in Luke (21:37) and John (8:20) tell us that this wasn't the only time Jesus was teaching in the Temple, and it appears that He may have done that a lot.

50. He told Mary and Joseph what He told them, “καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐ συνῆκαν τὸ ῥῆμα ὃ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς – and they did not understand the saying He spoke to them.” The verb “συνήμιτο – to

understand” means “*put together*, i.e. join facts (ideas) into a *comprehensive* (inter-locking) whole; *synthesize*.” It’s a new thing, Jesus teaching the teachers, and hard to get one’s head around.

Ellicott explains,

We are apt to think that they should have understood, and sceptical criticism has seen in this a contradiction to the previous history of the Annunciation and the Birth. Twelve years, however, of the life of childhood after the outward pattern of that of other children, may have dulled the impressions that had then been made; and even if they, in part, understood the words as referring to the marvel of His birth, they were still in the dark as to what He meant by being “about His Father’s business.” As it was, though it was the first flash of a greatness more than human, it was but momentary. It faded into “the light of common day,” and life went on in its quiet and simple fashion as before.

Eventually, Mary does just that. She gets it, and the NT offers abundant evidence that Mary understands Whom is her Son and believes in Him. Joseph sort of fades from the picture, and most actual scholars think he died at some point in the life of Jesus. We note that the angel speaks highly of him, and so does the Church; March 19 is the Feast Day of St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus.

51. For the benefit of the children, I may mention that if Jesus could do it, then you can do it, “καὶ κατέβη μετ’ αὐτῶν καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς Ναζαρέθ, καὶ ἦν ὑποτασσόμενος αὐτοῖς. – and He went down with them and went to Nazareth, and He was obedient to them,” like a good child should be, and perhaps seeing Him be obedient to them helped them to understand this incident in the Temple.

As for Mary, “καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ διετήρει πάντα τὰ ῥήματα ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς – and His mother kept all the sayings in her heart.” For a certainty “the sayings” refers to what He said to her about having to be in His Father’s house. Likely that conversation was longer than the short exchange related by Luke, and upon her approach to the Temple she would have heard Him teaching.

What all else had Jesus said to her those first twelve years. The verb “διατηρέω – to keep” occurs in the NT only here and in Acts (15:29), where Luke quotes the letter containing the rulings of the Council of Jerusalem. The meaning is that there are words and then there are words, and some words are more important than others, even in the Bible. The words of Jesus are very important.

52. Luke leaves us until the Baptism of Jesus with these words; “Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι παρὰ Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώποις – and Jesus continued to advance in wisdom and maturity and blessing in the presence of God and man.” The verb “προκόπτω – to advance” is used six times in the NT, and it means to move forward or make progress in three areas.

He will become increasingly wise, and in the Bible that’s a good thing. He will mature, and that’s no great shakes and is probably noted to confess that Jesus is human, as well as divine. His being

a blessing to mankind will become apparent in adulthood, and the greatest blessing will come at the end of His life; Holy Week, when He dies on the cross and rises, and in His Glorious Ascension.

Indeed, those final weeks and days bring the greatest – the only one that really matters in the end – blessing, as He defeats sin, death and hell and saves us from sin to eternal life in heaven. Those things are all there to be seen by all men as well as by God the Father. When He returns to the planet on the last day, unbelievers as well as believers will be forced to see Him for Whom He is.