

The Cast | People Engaged In the Story of Jesus Christ

"The Parents and the Young Man"

Luke 2.39ff

January 24, 2016

When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

⁴¹ Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; ⁴³ and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, ⁴⁴ but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ 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 My Father's house?" 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.

Today begins a series looking at the life of Jesus Christ as narrated in the Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This is our normal routine at this time of the year (between Christmas and Easter).

This year we pick up where we left off LAST year, looking at the supporting cast in these four stories, one DRAMA told by four narrators... We're interested in the "other actors"...it's the minor players on whom the Main Character shines...like they are the moon and He is the Sun...we see HIS light shining on THEM...light itself is invisible...until it hits some object...SO, we look at The Cast the People Engaged In the Story of Jesus Christ...and we see HIM!

This is the final scene in Luke's Birth Narrative. It's the only real glimpse we have of the childhood of Jesus Christ. People have speculated on what it would have been like in that HOME...but God apparently didn't think it was necessary for us to know.

This is the first time in Luke's Account that we hear the Main Character SPEAK. He responds to an urgent question posed by His parents when His mother asks, "How could you DO this to us?!"

In this little episode Luke promotes his first end; his first goal as a historian who carefully consulted the eyewitnesses...HIS GOAL is to reveal the IDENTITY of this Person ("this dangerous Boy" – song) and in doing so to get his readers to relate THEIR identities to HIS: "BECAUSE THIS PERSON IS _____, BY BELIEVING HIM, I BECOME _____." So let's look at that: #1) WHAT Child IS this? #2) WHY is this strange incident included? #3) HOW will it affect YOU? (WHAT child? WHY the episode? And HOW will it affect you?)

The writer of this Gospel is a historian. He says at the start of his work, "to compile an account of the things accomplished among us... (to consult those who) from the beginning were eyewitnesses... having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order..."

And Luke is most likely the Physician (who shows up later in the NT, Col.4.14) ...the man of science, of facts, of evidence leading to a diagnosis, a conclusion... LUKE'S first goal is to help his readers conclude WHO this main character IS. And Luke shows that OTHER people around this dangerous Boy...THEY too were wondering, "WHO IS THIS PERSON?"...even His parents...while they had been prepared for it, even THEY were not really sure.

These parents are godly people – not perfect people (and if you've ever failed your children, this episode should encourage you that EVEN the best parents in the world...Joseph and Mary left their child while on vacation!). But it was imperative that the Messiah be raised by people who (though NOT perfect!) were devoted to obeying God.

They would be responsible to OBEY for Jesus in those years when He could not obey for Himself. At the start, they would obey for HIM...and in the end... HE WOULD OBEY FOR THEM.

They brought Him to be circumcised when He was eight days old...some days later, they brought Him to the Temple to offer a sacrifice at the presentation as the Law required (Lev 12). Then they went back to Nazareth and they made these regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the Temple...for the Passover.

On this particular pilgrimage the child is twelve years old. They apparently come by caravan (like a hundred miles). They stay for the whole feast. They are not legalistic people (see 1.38) – they obey by faith but they obey fully. And then they leave the capital city to make the long journey home and after a full day's travel they realize they left their 12-year-old Son at the hotel (like Home Alone!). You know how it can happen ...especially when there are multiple vehicles!

They return...and then it takes a couple days within the city to locate their Son...because He's not at the hotel...He's at the Temple. And there He is...calm... no panic...at peace...and

surrounded by clergymen.

He's in a small group...He's sitting with the heavy-hitters, the theologians and teachers of the Law. He's asking questions about the Law and they are giving Him an opportunity to share.

People are coming around...it's like these little kids who play chess in Central Park (NYC) and every once in a while there's a PRODIGY...and it draws a crowd.

So here He is... "The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (2.40) and here is the evidence! "And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding"... not of chess or the violin but of LIFE...of PHILOSOPHY...of GOD...and the Ancient Law that bound the Israelites together as a nation... "This Kid ...gets it...and if He gets this...He gets LIFE!"

And His parents saw Him and are astonished (lit. "struck")... what Child IS this?

And then that question from the mother... "Child (not Son as in bulletin but "child") CHILD, how could you DO this to us...we were worried SICK... 'anxiously looking for You' (lit. were grieving)..."

And scholars say that this is the dramatic center of the story... "Child, why? Who do you think YOU are?"

And THAT really IS the question? Who does this Child think He IS and...who really IS He?

It's what was on their minds and Luke wants it to be on OUR minds... it's WHY this incident is included. It is a perfect moment to get his readers to enter the story...that's why at this dramatic center...in this point of tension and awkwardness (you almost feel like the theologians are saying, "Aw! Can't He stay just a little longer...pleeeeeease!") and the parents standing there in a panic...and the dangerous Boy...so composed (What has He been doing for three days? Did He eat? Did He sleep? Did He play?) He's so composed and at home...like He belongs.

And then to PULL US all the way IN to the story and join Luke in his goal... Luke has the main character speak...for the first time... "Why?... Why is it that you were looking for Me? I thought you knew I HAD TO BE in My Father's House."

After all, Mary had heard from the start... "you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High..." (1.31-32) and maybe she wondered WHY He would be called Son of the Most High...why THAT?

Well, here it is. He is 12 years old...the age when Jewish boys would enter an intense time of preparation...leading up to the Bar Mitzvah (lit. "Son of the Command"). Dads would crank up

the idea of calling or vocation...in Joseph's case, he would help his son become a carpenter. He would equip his son to carry on the family business...

And Jesus Christ is saying to Mary and Joseph, "That is exactly what's happening here! I am learning the family business from My Father...I am becoming the Son of the Command... (v. 49) I HAD TO BE in My Father's House." THAT'S a super important word for Luke... he draws attention to this phrasing again and again (like 15 times!)...certain things MUST HAPPEN ...have to happen... Jesus will say these words:

But He said to them, "I MUST preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." (4:43)

This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. She HAD TO BE released, even on the Sabbath?" (13:16)

Nevertheless I MUST journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem. (13:33)

'But WE HAD TO celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" (15:32)

"Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I MUST stay at your house." (19:5)

the Son of Man MUST BE delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." (24:7)

that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms MUST BE FULFILLED." (24:44)

And here the FIRST TIME THE MAIN CHARACTER SPEAKS, He asks, "Why is this a surprise, Mom? I'm beginning My apprenticeship in My Father's House...I had to BE IN MY FATHER'S House."

He means no disrespect to His mother or his earthly father...He is (v. 51) "in subjection to them"...it's just that they have to see...He is come to FULFILL His Father's will...He is Son of the Most High...and certain things MUST take place...

His parents still don't REALLY get it...but they do seem to know that it's not disobedience... it's actually obedience to His true Father...to a higher vocation... He's come to the Temple to begin His "Bar Mitzvah" to be the Son of the Command, to take upon Himself the responsibility to do all the Father's will, to uphold all the commands like no human being EVER had... It has to be.

And Mary is left...not really understanding what Jesus means...but knowing something infinitely wonderful is happening...she's still wondering, "What Child IS this?"... and "His Mother

treasured all these things in her heart.”

It's amazing how the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ in the Book of Luke both begins and ends with this scene. There are three days of sorrow...where Jesus is gone...and there's great grief and panic (those disappointed disciples on the Emmaus Road, it says "And they stood still, looking sad." 24.17) and then Jesus appears and the Scriptures are explained and the people are astonished and amazed and they say, "Were NOT our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (24:32)...""Our hearts burning within us"...and Mary "treasured all these things in her heart." Like BOOKENDS of Luke's Gospel!

That pattern repeated in the Hebrew Scriptures shows up here as well...three days of death and sorrow, followed by God doing what MUST TAKE PLACE...the Scriptures fulfilled...death defeated... God's people amazed and our hearts burning with us... treasuring these things in our hearts.

WHAT Child IS this? - Son of the Most High beginning His Apprenticeship...He has to BE there!

WHY is this strange incident included? - Because Luke wants to bring US in to the story... wants our hearts to be kindled...wants US to treasure these things in OUR hearts!

Last ("WHAT?", "WHY?" and HOW?) HOW will it affect YOU? ...

Well, as you soak in this...as you imagine this...as it sort of marinates into you...and as your heart holds on to it...really the word I'm looking for is believe...AS YOU BELIEVE THIS...the same character seen in this Dangerous Boy will begin to assert itself in YOU... the qualities of Sonship.

He is the Son of the Father, in whom the Father is well pleased, as it will say in the very next episode (3.22)... He has come to do all HIS FATHER'S WILL, to be "Bar Mitzvah", Son of the Commandment... He MUST be in the Temple...He must live the life we failed to live and die the death we deserve to die... and the Third Day rise again... He MUST!

And when YOU believe Him...and trust Him...when you get caught UP in His story...and it becomes the treasure of your heart... little by little the traits of Sonship will show up in YOU.

Obedience will become for you...a MUST...a passion. A kind of composure will grip you as you see in Him who sits among the heavyweights but NOT depending on their approval – HE HAS HIS FATHER'S APPROVAL.

He is able to humbly ask questions... and receive. He is able to know who He is and He is possessed by divine wisdom.

As HE (in His human nature) kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2.52) and we too (as we cling to Him and keep the story in our hearts...as we trust) we too “grow with a growth which is from God”. (Col 2.19). Organic growth; not forced and artificial.

Its not that we're making ourselves become SONS (that's impossible) it's that He comes to make us sons...to give His status TO us...to declare us sons...

BUT THEN also...to change the very nature of our life and our obedience...from that of a merely religious person or a slave...to usher us into the liberty of Sons (Gal 5.1; 2 Cor 3.17)...obeying from hearts secure and kindled and allured by an everlasting love...