

4. Raising the Messiah

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How would you like to raise a perfect child who never talks back to you, never have to tell him twice to get his attention, he finishes his homework and chores before you ask him to do, cleans his own room, shines his own shoes and even does his own laundry. You never get called into the principle's office because your child doesn't cause any problem. Come to think of it, I don't think I am going to like that, because the child has to teach how to be a daddy.

To make the matter worse, how would you like to be his brother or sister? While you do all the bad things, your perfect brother is always obedient to your parent and make you look bad. While you make bad grades, your brother gets straight A+s. He just makes your life miserable, wouldn't he?

Well, that is the case for the household of Jesus' parents and His siblings. Out of all four Gospels of Jesus Christ, Dr. Luke allows us to have rare glimpses of the childhood of Jesus Christ from eight days old to the age right before His ministry. I don't think that raising the Messiah was as easy as we might think.

A. FULFILLING THE COVENANTS HE INSTITUTED

Luke 2:21-24 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. 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 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 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."

Jesus was born a Jew and as a Jew, He was a subject to the commandments He created during the Old Testament time. But He redeems us from the Law's judgement, not by getting rid of the Law, but by fulfilling its demands.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

As any new parents Joseph and Mary had to observe three ceremony according to the Law of Moses. Let's look at them one at a time:

1) Circumcision

Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. So sacred was that ceremony that it could be carried out even on a Sabbath when the law forbade almost every other act which was not absolutely essential. And on that day a boy received his name.

2) The Redemption of the First-born

According to Exodus 13:2, every firstborn male, both of human beings and of cattle, was dedicated to God. The ceremony called the Redemption of the Firstborn. It cost the parents five shekels to redeem their son from God. The sum had to be paid to the priests.

3) The Purification after Childbirth

When a woman had borne a child, if it was a boy, she was unclean for forty days, if it was a girl, for eighty days. She could go about her household and her daily business but she could not enter the Temple or share in any religious ceremony according to Leviticus 12.

At the end of that time she had to bring to the Temple a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon for a sin offering. That was a somewhat expensive sacrifice, and so the law also allows another option that if she could not afford the lamb she might bring another pigeon. The offering of the two pigeons instead of the lamb and the pigeon was technically called "The Offering of the Poor."

From the offering they brought, we could tell Joseph and Mary were not rich like some Word of Faith movement teachers claimed to get money out of their listeners.

But what Joseph and Mary didn't realize is that when they brought little Baby Jesus to the Temple for this Purification Ceremony even though they didn't have a lamb because of their poverty, they brought the Perfect Lamb of God.

A couple of important things I must go over here:

1) Baby Dedication

If you have been attending our church for some time, you've noticed that we do not do "Baby Baptism," because it is not done in the Bible anywhere. With all due respect to those who have it done, Baby Baptism is not biblical. It is to satisfy the parents' religious mind only.

To have a baptism, you have to make a clear conscious decision that you publically declare your walk with Christ by immersing into water which symbolizes the death with Christ and coming out of water which symbolize the resurrection with Christ.

However, we do a baby dedication to the Lord in our church according to this portion of the Scripture. When they do this, the parents are promising to the Lord and in the presence of all of you that they would raise their child in God's way that he or she may follow Him for the rest of their lives.

2) Godly responsibility as parents

Unlike the other Gospel writers, Luke adds these scenes into his Gospel to remind us how God values life highly. God has given children to parents as a sacred trust – to name them, shape them, then send them out on their own as godly grown-ups. What a privilege to share in God's creation and nurturing of human life!

We are living in the day of self-esteem for children. Somehow many parents are told that they should allow children to express their emotions as they please. They are also told that any discipline against child can hurt his or her self-esteem. Hogwash! That is why we have a bunch of brats running around in the school and threatening other students and teachers with their brute force. If you don't discipline your children in love according to God's way, your children will become out-of-control monsters in future.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

B. SIMEON, AN AGING MAN OF GOD

Luke 2:25-35 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. 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. 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, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 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 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

To the mass of people swarming through the temple that day, Jesus was just another baby nestled in the arms of a young mother. No one would have noticed Him – no one, except Simeon, because he was led by the Holy Spirit.

Like the prophets of the Old Testament, Simeon was uniquely anointed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon him to meet the Savior in the Temple. During this period when the Scriptures were still under formation, the Spirit sometimes revealed His will to godly people through dreams and visions.

How Simeon recognized this infant as the promised Savior, we don't know. But the moment he saw His face peeking through the folds of the infant's blanket, he knew. And, filled with the Spirit, he took Jesus into his grandfatherly arms and sang a beautiful song of blessing and gave a bone-chilling warning to the young mother.

This prophecy must have sent a shiver down Mary's spine, who, with motherly instinct, surely yearned to gather up her little One and shelter Him from whatever evils might come. One day she will stand below a blood-stained cross, watching in horror as life spills out of her precious Son.

C. ANNA, AN EIGHTY FOUR YEAR OLD PROPHETESS

Luke 2:36-38 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; 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. 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.

Anna had endured her own heart-piercing experience when she lost her husband after only seven years of marriage. But she had remained in the Lord for service and devotion. Over the years of working at the temple, she had seen many parents come through with their firstborn sons. But, like Simeon, she knew this One was special.

D. BACK TO NAZARETH

Luke 2:39-40 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. 40 And the

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

Between verses 38 and 39, many crucial events happened in Jesus' young life that only disciple Matthew fills in for us. First, the family returned to Bethlehem and, apparently, settled there for a while. During the next year or so, magi, the wisemen from the East, visited them with their gifts. Right after that, jealous king Herod tried to eliminate his rival by ordering an execution of all the baby boys under two years old in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.

Fortunately, an angel had forewarned Joseph of Herod's wicked intent and had sent the young family fleeing to Egypt. When the murderous king died, an angel again appeared to Joseph to tell him it was now safe to return. Led by God, Joseph took his family through Judea into Galilee and settled in the safety and obscurity of his and Mary's hometown, Nazareth.

Jesus' early life reminds us that hardships don't always deprive children of a healthy childhood experience. Abuse and neglect steal away health. But trials can be strengthening to children as long as parents supply abundant security, comfort and protection.

By the way, Jesus did not perform any miracles as a Boy, unlike the gospel of Thomas which is unbiblical. The turning of water into wine was the beginning of His miracles after He was over thirty.

E. JESUS DITCHED HIS MAMA

Luke 2:41-45 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. 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; 44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

When I read this portion, I thought, "Alright, Jesus ditched His mama." Can you imagine how Mary must have felt for losing the Messiah?

How could they have lost track of their Son? In a large "caravan" during that time of the history, the women and small children went ahead and the men followed with the bigger boys. Joseph and Mary may each have thought that Jesus was with the other. For a full day they journeyed, looking for Him among the travellers before they concluded He must still be in Jerusalem.

F. JUST DOING MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

Luke 2:46-52 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. 47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. 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." 49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. 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. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

It wasn't unusual for students to meet teachers of the Law in the temple, plying them with questions and attentively listening to their answers. What was unusual was the way Jesus was answering the teacher's questions! His youthful perceptiveness sparked several reactions from the teachers. This was their Son, going head-to-head with the brightest mind of Israel.

I believe that this is when Jesus started to realize His destiny as the Messiah. Certainly He grew in His comprehension of those mysteries as He communed with His Father in prayer and was taught by the Spirit.

Jesus is a wonderful example for all young people to follow. He grew up in a balanced way without neglecting any part of life, and His priority was to do the will of His Father. He knew how to listen and how to ask the right questions. He learned how to work, and He was obedient to His parents.

When Jesus emerged from Nazareth, eighteen years later, the Father was able to say of Him, *"You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."*

Young people and those who are young at heart, listen carefully, please. While the world entices you and tries to convince you to do whatever you feel like, including going directly against what the Lord says in His Word the Bible, you still have a choice. You don't have to follow this dying corrupt world. What they offer to you may sound good for now, but it will cost you your eternal soul. Is it worth to you? It is not.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) To raise children in God's way, consult the Word of God more than so-called child specialists. God knows what He is talking about.

Raising children is more than just another task of parents. We must shape them, mold them and encourage them in God's way to bring glory to Him.

2) Abuse and neglect steal away health. But trials can be strengthening to children as long as parents supply abundant security, comfort and protection.

Mom and dad, you must obey the Word of God first to make a good example for your children to follow. It is not the church's job, nor school's, but yours.