

Christ in all of Scripture

Jesus & the Teachers in the Temple

Luke 2:41-52

Read the Passage

⁴¹His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶Now 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. ⁴⁷And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸So 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."

⁴⁹And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

⁵¹Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.



"The Boy Jesus with the Doctors in the Temple" by Heinrich Hoffman

Note: Observe how Jesus is the source of light in the painting.



Gospel Preview in the Text

At the time of the Passover Feast, Mary and Joseph sorrow over the twelve year old Jesus, fearing they have lost him. They hasten back to Jerusalem and search for him, finding him on the third day. Jesus has been with the doctors of the law, asking and answering questions and they are astonished at his insight and answers. Mary ponders all this in her heart. This account is paralleled by the account of the Emmaus disciples. At the time of the Passover Feast, Cleopas and his companion sorrow over Jesus, fearing they have lost him. A stranger enters into a discussion with them on their way home. Jesus, whose identity is masked, asks and answers questions and they are astonished by his insight and answers. On the third day, however, the disciples recognize Jesus. They hasten back to Jerusalem to announce that Jesus had been found, and that his exposition of the Scripture had strangely warmed their hearts.

While the parallels between these texts are striking, no clear iconic or ecphrastic image emerges from the text. We have chosen to call such correspondences constituting a gospel preview as paradigmatic.

JESUS & HIS PARENTS	JESUS & HIS EMMAUS DISCIPLES
1. Jesus and his parents go up to Jerusalem at the feast of Passover (Luke 2:41-42).	1. Jesus and his disciples go up to Jerusalem at the feast of Passover (Luke 22:7-11).
2. Jesus is thought to be lost in the city. His parents hasten to return to Jerusalem to search for him and find him after three days (Luke 2:43-45).	2. Jesus is thought to be lost to death. When recognized after three days , his Emmaus disciples hasten to return to Jerusalem to announce he has been found (Luke 24:19-21, 33-34).
3. Jesus is sitting amongst the teachers, asking and answering questions to the teachers' astonishment (Luke 2:46-47).	3. Jesus is sitting at supper amongst his two disciples from Emmaus, and they are astonished at his questions and answers (Luke 24:26, 32).
4. Jesus' mother speaks of their sorrow over what might have happened to Jesus (Luke 2:48).	4. Cleopas speaks of their sorrow at what had happened to Jesus (Luke 24:18-21).
5. Mary's sorrow turns to joy as she treasures these things in her heart (Luke 2:51).	5. The Emmaus disciples say that their hearts burned within them as their sorrow turns to joy (Luke 24:32).
6. Jesus tells Mary that he had to be about his Father's commission (Luke 2:49).	6. Jesus tells the disciples that he will send the promise of his Father upon them (Luke 24:49).
7. Jesus goes back to Galilee and grows in stature and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52; cf. 1 Sam 2:26).	7. Jesus goes back to Galilee (cf. Matt 28:10). The church, the body of Christ, grows in number, praising God and having favor with all the people (Acts 2:41, 47).



Prophetic Narrative of the Gospel in the Text

1. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem with his parents for the Passover at age twelve bears striking similarity to his journey to Jerusalem for the Passover when he suffers death.
2. In both accounts, two people fear that Jesus has been lost. His parents hasten back to Jerusalem and search for him sorrowing. They find him alive in the temple. His Emmaus disciples discover that he is in fact alive, recognizing him at their supper. They hasten back to Jerusalem to announce that they have seen Jesus. In both accounts, Jesus is discovered on the third day. The third day marks the transition from sorrow to joy.
3. Both accounts highlight the amazing insight of Jesus. He both asks and answers questions. The substance of the conversation with the Emmaus disciples is the suffering of Messiah that preceded his glory. The parallel accounts suggest that it is most likely that this is also the substance of the conversation the young Jesus had with the learned doctors in the temple. Jesus is about to have his bar mitzvah, and the custom would be for Joseph to contract a marriage for him. Jesus had come to understand that his "Father's business" involved his "suffering;" he needed to recognize this in order to instruct Joseph that for him there was not to be a bride in the customary sense.
4. The question of Mary's reproof of Jesus is instructive. Upon discovering Jesus, his mother questions why he has caused the sorrow of his parents. Jesus' reply is that he must now begin to fulfill his heavenly Father's destiny for him. But in doing so, he has not dishonored his earthly father and mother. In fact, he likely intended the sequence of Mary's emotions, sorrow becoming sudden joy, to prepare her for the hour Simon had foreseen when her heart would be rent by a sword of grief. Mary was a reflective woman. As she pondered these things when the hour of her sorrow truly came when Jesus died, perhaps she recalled and took comfort from the promise that she would see Jesus again on the third day.
5. In both accounts the suffering and glory of Jesus finds a heart response among those who love him. Beginning with the third day, Mary pondered all these things in her heart. The Emmaus disciples felt a burning warmth in their hearts as Jesus' exposition of the Hebrew law and prophets gave them growing hope that Jesus had truly risen on the third day, as he said.
6. Jesus admonished his mother that he must undertake the commission of his heavenly Father. From that moment on, although he would yet obey his earthly parents and live in submission to them, he must begin his own seeking of the will of his heavenly Father. Similarly, after revealing himself to his Emmaus disciples, he admonished all of his disciples that they too must now undertake to accomplish all that the Father intended for them, once he sent his promised Spirit upon them.
7. Luke's description of Jesus' obedience to his parents and the summary that he "grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52) is a clear typology based on the record of Samuel that he too "grew in stature and favor with the Lord and also with man" (1 Sam 2:26). Why does Luke allude to Samuel in his understanding of Jesus?



The Hebrew chronicler's summary of Samuel's growth in grace is set against the background of the increasing apostasy of Israel's priesthood under Eli (1 Sam 2:22-26). The evangelist understood the ministry of Samuel to foreshadow the ministry of Jesus. Samuel emerged as the true prophetic voice of God in a context when the levitical priesthood was massively corrupt and so was utterly rejected by the Lord (1 Sam 2:22-36; 3:11-14). Likewise, the people were equally corrupt and Samuel also witnessed the rejection by the people of the Lord as Israel's king, just as they rejected the faithful remonstrance of God's prophet (1 Sam 8:1-9). Each of these themes would be reprised in the ministry of Jesus. The priests would corrupt themselves and they would bring condemnation upon their office by rejecting the prophetic voice of John the Baptist and in rejecting the claims of Jesus as the Lord's Messiah, her King (Luke 22:63-23:2). Just as he had promised in the days of Samuel, the Lord raised up a Priest-King, a new David, who "will do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build for him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before me as my Messiah forever" (1 Sam 2:35-36).

Gospel Takeaways from the Text

1. Just as we saw with the birth narrative of Jesus foreshadowing the resurrection of the Savior, a parallel that framed the entire earthly life of Jesus, so now we see a further parallel between the sorrow of Jesus' parents turning to joy when Jesus was twelve and the sorrow of the Emmaus disciples turning to joy when Jesus was seen by them after his resurrection. This new set of bookend parallels lends its own symmetry and beauty to the providence of Jesus' earthly life recorded in the Gospel and the heavenly life of Jesus recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Just as Jesus grew in wisdom and favor, so the same pattern of blessing and growth takes place in the church, the body of Jesus after his ascension.
2. We note that the "third day" theology is central to both accounts (cf. 1 Cor 15:4). The "third day" is the day of deliverance, especially from death, in the Bible. Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh's cupbearer, Israel, Joshua's spies, Joshua, the Gibeonites, David, Jonah, Hezekiah, Daniel, Esther, and Paul are all delivered from death on the third day in anticipation and remembrance of the third day of Jesus' eschatological victory over death.¹
3. It is instructive that Jesus made himself known to the Emmaus disciples in the breaking of bread at the supper (Luke 24:35). The high Eucharistic character of this supper is evident. We should note that Jesus was there with his disciples in his physical as well as spiritual presence. What a joy to anticipate that the Savior truly encounters us as well in the breaking of the bread, when our sorrows turn to joy!

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¹ See Warren Austin Gage with Leah Grace Gage, *Milestones to Emmaus: The Third Day Resurrection in the Old Testament* (Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.: St. Andrews House, 2015).

