**THE PRETEEN BOY JESUS**

**Luke 2:41-52**

**Key Verse: 2:49**

**"'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'"**

**Study Questions:**

1. How did the Jewish people celebrate the Passover Feast? Why was it important for them to keep the Passover Feast? What was God's pur­pose for his people after the Exodus? (Ex 19:4-6) When did Je­sus' par­ents take Jesus to the Passover Feast? What do you know about teen­agers and preteens? How should we treat them?

2. When did the parents miss him? How did they find him? Where was he and what was he doing? What did the people and his parents think about this? Why? How did his mother rebuke him?

3. How did the boy Jesus respond to his mother? What did he mean by "my Father's house"? (Mt 6:9) Why do we need two fathers?

4. With what kind of attitude did Jesus study the Bible? (46,47; Dt 6:5) Why did the boy Jesus say that he "had to be" in his Father's house? What does this show about his desire to do God's work?

5. Read verses 51-52. How was Jesus different from abnormal teenagers of every generation? Why is it important for young people to learn obedi­ence? What can we learn here about Jesus' boyhood and young man­hood in Nazareth? Why is he an exemplary son to his parents?

**Luke the historian and evangelist carefully observes the twelve-year-old boy Jesus in the temple. Apart from this incident, which Luke alone narrates, we know nothing of Jesus' boyhood. We give much credit to St. Luke for this. Many Bible scholars have endless controver­sial arguments on this passage due to their lack of faith. But it is a simple story of the boy Jesus who gives us a good example that every­body can follow and should follow if they are normal preteens or teens. Also, we learn from this story that we should respect the preteens and teenagers as whole men and as the future leaders of the nation as well as of the whole world.**

**First, the boy Jesus at the Passover (41-45).**

**The Passover had histori­cal significance for the people of Israel, and it continued seven days. The Passover was the climac­tic event after God delivered the suffer­ing Israelites from Pharaoh's rule. We call this event the Exodus. The Exo­dus was possible where there was a man of God, Moses. Moreover, it had God's definite purpose for his people. As we know well, his peo­ple could not maintain God's blessing in the promised land. His people had to know God's grace and mission for them. They liked milk and honey. And they abandoned God. Because of this, God trained them 430 years in Egypt where only un­godly peo­ple lived. Among ungodly people, they had experienced enough miseries for 430 years. After training was over, God delivered them so that they might be a shep­herd nation and a kingdom of priests. Exodus 19:5-6 says, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my cove­nant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured posses­sion. Al­though the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy na­tion." These verses reveal God's grace and glori­ous mission for his people. After the Exo­dus, the people of Israel were will­ing to make the pilgrim­age to Jeru­salem to remember God's grace of deliver­ance. It had been a joy­ous occasion for the people of Israel. Every year Jesus' parents also went to Jerusalem to observe the Passover Feast (41). According to Jewish custom, it was legal for boys from age twelve to par­ticipate in the festivals and ceremonies of the Law of Moses (42). As soon as Jesus became twelve, his parents took him to the Passover Feast.**

**At that time, Jesus was a preteen boy. What then do we know about preteen boys or teenagers? We know that they are getting beau­tiful, like blossoming flowers. Mostly, the preteens eat a lot. Most boys and girls who went to Jeru­salem might have enjoyed eating Jerusa­lem bagels. The pre­teens are curious about many things. The preteens are pure and sweet. Still, we think they can't do much. But that's not true. When we look back, the preteen days were the most beautiful days with the most beautiful dreams and hope. Many great men of history were those who had fulfilled their childhood dreams. The pre­teens are most energetic and capa­ble of doing many things. The pre­teens can learn five languages before the age of twelve. Most of all, they are humble; they have a learning mind. At the same time, they are ambitious. It is said that when Napo­leon Bona­parte was a teenag­er, he tried to catch a rainbow in the sky while riding on a horse all day long. But he was not exhausted.**

**They also have an inborn desire to know God in their deep hearts. There is a funny story. One little boy asked his mother, "How was I born?" His mo­ther said, embarrassedly, "You came out of my belly­button." We can laugh off the question as a little boy's idle words. But in light of philos­ophy, it is an ontological ques­tion. The boy want­ed to know where he came from and where he was going back to. In other words, he wanted to know the truth, for knowing the truth is where I came from and where I am going back to. In light of the pre­teen Jesus, the time of the pre­teens is a time of great learning and the time of founding one's whole life. There­fore, we must have a basic respect for the preteens and teenag­ers as whole men. Because they are a little bit mischievous, if we ig­nore them it is a great mistake. We must take care of them very prayerfully.**

**After the festival, Joseph and Mary left. They say that it was the cus­tom when returning from the Feast for women to go on ahead with the young­er children, and men to follow with the bigger boys. The boy Jesus was between preteens and teens, for he was twelve years old. So Mary thought that Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph thought that he was with Mary. At the end of a day's journey, they began look­ing for him among rela­tives and friends. To their consternation, they found that Jesus was lost (44,45). They felt as if their hearts were fail­ing. Early the next morning, Jo­seph and Mary had to go back to Jeru­salem, a day's journey on foot, to look for him. When they arrived, it was already night. It was too late to look for him. The next morn­ing they went around Jerusalem to look for him.**

**On the third day, his parents found him in the temple courts sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them ques­tions (46). Every­one who heard him was amazed at his questions and answers. We don't know what they were asking and answering, but the preteen boy had questions which took three days and nights to ask; it is not an ordinary event in history. Here we learn the preteens and teenagers are full of ques­tions. Usually people think teens are trou­ble-mak­ers and that they make a fuss about trifles. But that's not entirely true. Goethe said, "Teens are the most capa­ble of imagina­tion." It is common sense that one's integrity is form­ed during the time of teens. Jesus had no time for Bible study. But he had. He used his festi­val time for Bible study. Especially, people were amaz­ed by his questions, not be­cause the boy Jesus' questions were high­ly scho­­l­as­tic, but his ques­tions were fundamental and universal for all man­kind. Peo­ple were amazed at his an­swers be­cause the boy Jesus could an­swer all the questions asked by sophisticated theologians. It was pos­sible for Jesus to answer their questions because he only answered from the Bible.**

**As we know, most students usually have no more than one or two ques­tions. But Jesus, at age twelve, had so many ques­tions to ask. After three days, he was still answering their ques­tions and asking them his questions. Here we learn that the time of the preteens is a time of great learning and a time of overflow­ing sta­mina and ener­gy. There is a ro­mantic story. A rich father want­ed to make his daughter a world-famous pia­nist. But she didn't make prog­ress. One night, in a dark room, a fantastic piano sound was heard. It was Chopin. He had a great desire to learn piano. So he me­morized and made a paper piano and practiced. He thought his par­­ents and sister were out. So he went into his sister's room for the first time and played her piano. He be­came a world-famous pianist at age twelve.**

**Therefore we must help our children to study diligently, acknow­ledg­ing that they have overflowing stamina and desire to know the truth. We must pray that God may restore the basis of the educa­tional system of this country from evolution to creation faith. We also must teach our children to have the fear of God. Prov­erbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the be­ginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." We must teach our children to have the fear of God as a matter of life and death.**

**Second, the boy Jesus studied the Bible wholeheartedly.**

**The boy Je­sus was also a diligent Bible student. The mood of the Feast had calmed down and everyone else was busy to go back home. The boy Jesus, however, did not go back with his parents; he re­mained in the temple. For three days, the boy Jesus, sitting among the teachers, was listening to them and asking questions.**

**In light of his answer to his parents, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Fa­ther's house?" we learn that Jesus wanted to be in his Father's house. The boy Jesus was a pre-teenager, for the teenage years start from age 13. He seemed to have been too young to talk about God. But the boy Jesus was talking about God with such con­centration for the last three days that he forgot that he was hungry. He also forgot to go back home with his parents. This part does not teach that Jesus was an extraordinary person. This part teaches us that all preteens and teen­agers should grow as Jesus did. Here we learn that the Bible study should be the first priority. If it becomes the second priority no one can understand the promise and mystery of the king­dom of God.**

**John Calvin was a very ordinary young man. Probably he began to have a burning desire to know God from his childhood. He wrote "The Insti­tutes of the Christian Religion" when he was 25 years old. It is totally un­believable that he wrote such a great book when he was so young. Ob­vious­ly, he studied the Bible diligently during his teenage time. Illinois is called "The Land of Lincoln." We are still greatly in­spired when we think of Presi­dent Abraham Lincoln, especially when we think of his honesty, cour­age, and love of truth. How could he be so? They say that he had a burning de­sire to know the Bible truth. They say that he educated himself through the Bible study. He also came to know the truth of God through the Bible stu­dy. As a result, he de­­clar­ed freedom for the black people. And this na­tion had to suffer much through Civil War. But the fruit of righteousness is remark­able.**

**Third, Jesus knew that he had two fathers (49).**

**Anyway, Jesus' par­ents were happy to see him again. At that mo­ment, his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you" (48b). How did he answer? "'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?'" (49) "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" When the boy Jesus ans­wered, he meant he had two fa­thers, a physical father and a heavenly Fa­ther. When we are young, we need a physical father who can protect us to grow as a man. And when we grow up, we need a heaven­ly Father who can help us to grow in the image of God. Here we learn a universal truth. When we are young we must have a good relationship with our parents. But when our parents get old and die we must have a relationship with our heavenly Father. Those who have a good relationship with the heavenly Father can have a good relationship with others. John 15:5 says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."**

**Fourth, the boy Jesus had the desire to do God's work.**

**Until now, the boy Jesus had worked hard as an obedient carpen­ter's apprentice under his human father. But for the first time, he did some­thing with­out permission. So Mary asked, "Why have you treated us like this?" Jesus answered in verse 49, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Fa­ther's house?" According to the King James Version, it meant, "Didn't you know I must be about my Father's business?" Up until now, Jesus had been an obedient child. But Jesus could not be forever a good child of his parents and expect an obedient child in his future family. Jesus, in the corner of his heart, had a holy mission to do his heav­enly Father's busi­ness. When he was twelve, "must" was already in his heart.**

**In the boy Jesus we learn a universal truth: Man must work hard to eat three meals a day, but that is not everything. Man is creat­ed to carry out the holy mission of God: Man is created to live for the glo­ry of God (Lk 1:74,75). If we do so, we are happy indeed. Everyone has heart's desire to be­come a man of holy mission, for God made man so. When Dr. Schweit­z­er was eight years old, he prayed, "Lord, bless me to study well so that I may serve you the rest of my life after study." He prayed like this, not be­cause he was a religious gen­i­us, but because his inner person compelled him to do so. While he was study­ing the humanities, theology, music and medicine, God's high calling was always in his heart. After study, God blessed him to do God's work in Africa. When he died, even Soviet news­papers rec­og­­nized him as a light of the 20th century. Of course, there is a conflict between "my work" and God's work; we can't avoid this conflict.**

**Fifth, he was obedient to them (51-52).**

**This part tells us what the boy Jesus did after coming back from the Feast. Look at verse 51a. "Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them." It is remarkable that the boy Jesus was obedient after his unusual experi­ence in the Jerusalem temple. The boy Jesus came back to his carpen­try work and he was obedient to his parents. At that time, carpentry was demanding, including the erection of houses, the mak­ing of all kinds of furniture, household equipment and agricultural imple­ments. The boy Jesus had to work hard again. But still, he was obedient. How beautiful the boy Jesus was! Probably Mary felt God was with him. So she treasured all these things in her heart. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (52).**

**All preteens and teens must imitate the preteen Jesus. May God bless all American preteens and teenagers to imitate the image of Jesus.**