

CHAPTER 2

The Lord's Early Years

Growing

In the last chapter we learned that the young child Jesus was attacked by the devil from the day He was born (Revelation 12:4). Satan is also our enemy from the day we are **born again**, but God is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4). God will not allow Satan to ruin His plans for Jesus or for those who trust Him today.

In this chapter we want to see Jesus in His **growing up years**. What can we learn about His childhood and boyhood as He grew from an infant to a child, from a child to a teenager and from a teenager to a young man? Perhaps this will show us something about how **we** should grow up as we go from stage to stage, from one year to the next.

The Bible says very little about the years when Jesus was growing up. Most of what we know about Jesus took place during the 3½ years of His public ministry, beginning with His baptism (Luke 3:21-22), and concluding with His death and resurrection (Luke chapters 23 and 24). How old was Jesus when He began His public ministry (Luke 3:23)? He was about _____

There are two verses in Luke chapter 2 which tell us about Jesus and how He grew up. Let's look at these verses carefully:

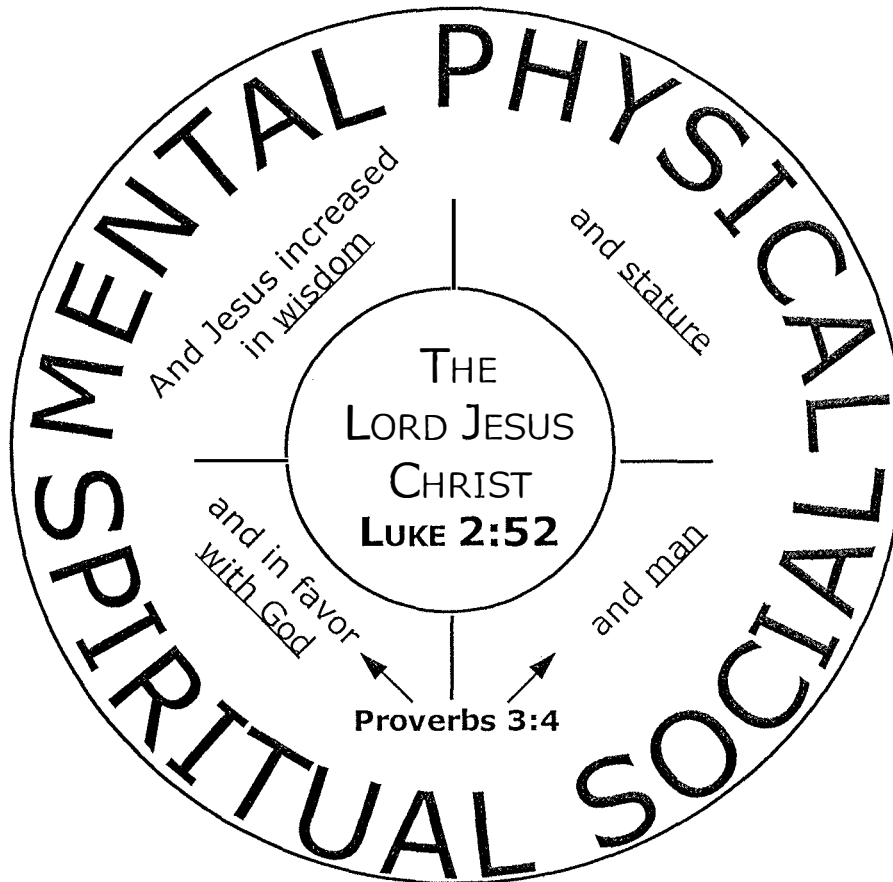
LUKE 2:40	LUKE 2:52
Jesus' growth from an infant to age twelve:	Jesus' growth from age twelve to about thirty years:
"And the (young) child _____, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with _____: and the grace (favor) of God was upon Him."	"And Jesus increased (advanced, made progress, pushed forward as a pioneer would cut his way forward through a thick forest or jungle) in _____ and stature, and in favor with _____ and _____."

In Luke 2:40 we learn that the young child Jesus not only grew physically (He increased in size and strength), but He also grew in wisdom (He was continually being filled with wisdom). Can a young child (3 years old, 5 years old, 7 years old, 9 years old, 11 years old, etc.) grow in wisdom or does he need to wait until he is at least 20 before he can do this? Can **you** grow in wisdom **right now**? What is wisdom? Is wisdom being able to multiply 28 by 14? Is wisdom being able to learn facts about history and science? Can a young person get straight "A's" in school and still be unwise? Does wisdom have anything to do with God (Proverbs 9:10)? Wisdom is taking knowledge and using it in the right way, in a way that honors God and helps other people.

How old does a person need to be before he (or she) can do right and live right? If boys and girls are old enough to do wrong, are they also old enough to do right? If boys and girls are able to read storybooks, comics and other books, are they also able to read their Bibles? If a young person at age 11 never reads his Bible, do you think he will read it when he is age 18? If boys and girls are old enough to talk, are they also old enough to pray? Are **you** old enough to do these things?

Also, we should never say, "God doesn't know what it is like to grow up with all the struggles and problems that a young person must go through!" Does God know what it is like to be a young person and to grow up? God knows just what we go through! The One who died on the cross was once a boy Himself and He has a special interest in boys and girls, as well as in grown up people. He had parents like you do (Luke 2:41). He had brothers and sisters like you do (Mark 6:3). How old are you right now? _____ Was Jesus once that same age? _____ Jesus was once the very same age as you are right now!

In Luke 2:52 we learn more about the growth of the Son of man. The following diagram may be helpful:



The Lord Jesus, as He grew up, made steady progress in these four areas of life. He made progress physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. What occupation helped Him to grow physically (Mark 6:3)? _____ Is it possible for a person to develop mentally but to be immature socially? That is, can a person be very intelligent (know a lot about different things) and yet not relate to and get along with other people very well? As God looked at His Son at the end of those thirty years of growth, was He pleased (Luke 3:22)? _____

Even though we are given very little information about Jesus' growing up years, there is one important fact that we are told. We learn in Luke 2:51 that Jesus was continually S_____ to His parents. This means that He put Himself under the authority of Joseph and His mother and He was obedient to them. He honored His mother and father. As a boy and as a teen, He did not rebel and disobey. He perfectly obeyed his parents (see Colossians 3:20 and Ephesians 6:1-2). What kind of son or daughter are you?

- a. Most of the time obedient and subject to parents
- b. Usually obedient and subject to parents
- c. Sometimes obedient and subject to parents
- d. Rarely obedient and subject to parents

If you are old enough to disobey, are you also old enough to obey?

Missing But Not Lost

How old was the boy Jesus when He went with His family to Jerusalem (Luke 2:42)?

_____ Jerusalem was about 70 miles from Jesus' home town of

N _____ (Luke 2:39). When Joseph and Mary started on their return trip, what did Jesus do (Luke 2:43)? _____ Did His parents know about this?

_____ They thought He was among their relatives (Luke 2:44)? How long did it take to find Him (Luke 2:46)? _____

Do you think Joseph and Jesus' mother were filled with concern during these three days (Luke 2:48)? _____ Where did they finally find Him (Luke 2:46)?

_____ Was Jesus worried and concerned (Luke 2:49)? _____

Jesus was in God's house (the temple) sitting in the midst (middle) of doctors (Luke 2:46) or teachers. These men were not medical doctors but they were teachers. They were Jewish men who studied and taught the Old Testament. As Jesus sat there, did He have this attitude, "I'm the Son of God and these teachers are nothing but ignorant men; therefore I am not going to listen to them and I will not ask them any questions because there is nothing I can learn from them"? _____

Not only did Jesus ask questions, but He also gave A _____ (Luke 2:47), and the teachers were amazed as their student began teaching them! Probably the questions Jesus asked showed so much understanding and wisdom that the teachers began to ask Him questions! Does God desire boys and girls (ages 9 through 12) to have understanding and to have answers? Does God want this for you? Do you want answers? Do you ask questions? If not, why not? Does asking questions always mean that you will understand things right away? Each time we think and ask questions and look for answers, we understand a little more.

When Jesus' parents found Him, He said to them, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) When Jesus spoke about "my Father" was He speaking of Joseph? _____ Remember, Joseph was not Jesus' biological father (see Luke 1:31,34-36; Matthew 1:18-25), even though he "fathered" Him (that is, Joseph raised Him, taught Him, provided for Him, etc.). There are about 40 places in the Gospel of John where Jesus said, "Father" (for example, John 5:17; 8:28) and in not one of these places was the Lord talking about Joseph! Jesus had a Heavenly Father!

Mary and Joseph should have known where Jesus was! He was not lost. He was in the right place, doing the right thing!

Where do your parents find you? When they find you, what do they find you doing? Do they find you in the right place doing the right thing? Do your parents find you concerned about the things of the heavenly Father? Do they ever find you reading your Bible? Do they ever find you praying? Do they ever find you helping someone in need? Do they ever find you talking to a friend about the Lord? If they were to find you at school, would they find you in the right place doing the right thing? Whose business will they find you concerned about? Your own business? Your friends' business? Worldly business? God's business?

The boy Jesus proved that it is possible for every boy and girl to be in the right place doing the right thing. May God make this true for you!

Suppose we were to make up a story about the childhood of Jesus. What would our story be like? Would we have Jesus perform many miracles when He was just a boy? Would we make him like a "super-hero" with all kinds of superhuman powers?

A long time ago people who did not even know Jesus made up stories about His childhood. Here is one example. It is from a false gospel, called "The Gospel of Thomas":

When this boy Jesus was five years old he was playing at the ford of a brook, and he gathered together into pools the water that flowed by, and made it at once clean...He made soft clay and fashioned from it twelve sparrows...And there were also many other children playing with him. Now when a certain Jew saw what Jesus was doing in his play on the Sabbath, he at once went and told his father Joseph: "See, your child is at the brook, and he has taken clay and fashioned twelve birds and has profaned the Sabbath." And when Joseph came to the place and saw (it), he cried out to him, saying: "Why do you do on the Sabbath what ought not to be done?" But Jesus clapped his hands and cried to the sparrows: "Off with you!" And the sparrows took flight and went away chirping. The Jews were amazed when they saw this.

But the son of Annas the scribe was standing there with Joseph; and he took a branch of a willow and (with it) dispersed the water which Jesus had gathered together. When Jesus saw what he had done he was enraged and said to him: "You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you also shall wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit." And immediately that lad withered up completely; and Jesus departed and went into Joseph's house. But the parents of him that was withered took him away, bewailing his youth, and brought him to Joseph and reproached him: "What a child you have, who does such things."

After this again he went through the village, and a lad ran and knocked against his shoulder. Jesus was exasperated and said to him: "You shall not go further on your way." and the child immediately fell down and died. But some, who saw what took place, said: "From where does this child spring, since his every word is an accomplished deed?" And the parents of the dead child came to Joseph and blamed him and said: "Since you have such a child, you cannot dwell with us in the village; or else teach him to bless and not to curse. For he is slaying our children." [From Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha, Volume 1*, Editor, W. Schneemelcher; Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1963]

Consider the following:

1. This is not the inspired Word of God; it is a made up story by people who had no idea what Jesus was really like.
2. The Bible does not give us any examples of Jesus performing miracles when he was a boy. Instead it tells us that His first miracle took place at a wedding in Cana when Jesus was about 30 years old (John 2:11).
3. The miracles of Jesus always were done for a purpose (to do good to someone, to communicate a message, etc.). Making clay birds become alive and fly away is certainly dazzling, but what good purpose does it accomplish?
4. Apparently Jesus had dammed up the water, but a friend came along and broke the dam with the branch of a tree. Jesus became so angry that he verbally attacked the boy, called him bad names and then caused him to wither up completely (killed him?). What lesson is there in this for boys and girls? Do we want them to seek revenge anytime a playmate messes with their toys? If a child builds a sandcastle and another child steps on it, should the first child try to kill the one who played such a prank? Is this the lesson a child should learn from what Jesus did in this story? Is this teaching love and forgiveness and forbearance?
5. Later a friend (accidentally?) bumps into Jesus (knocks against his shoulder), and Jesus immediately causes him to drop dead! What kind of lesson should boys and girls learn from this?
6. Any thinking person should recognize that these stories are absurd and blasphemous, and have nothing to do with what Jesus was really like as a boy. It is also a reminder to us that if the Gospels were written by men, the stories would be much different from what we have in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. How thankful we should be that God's Word is completely free from human error!