

THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF THE BOY WONDER

There are legends of what and where Jesus traveled in the first thirty years of His life. Some say He went to India. My personal favorite is that Joseph of Arimathea, the successful merchant and uncle to the Lord Jesus who took Him in His youth to what is now known as Great Britain. Here are the opening words of the unofficial English National Anthem: "And did those feet in ancient time walk upon England's mountains green: And was the holy Lamb of God, on England's pleasant pastures seen!" At best these legends are apocryphal, but I write to you today of the documented remarkable journey of Christ, the Wonderful One, at the age of twelve years as found in Luke 2:39 through 52.

I. A Wonderful Harbinger

In Luke 2:39-41 we see that a harbinger is established because the only way Jesus could truly be Savior is if He kept all the law, not just part of it. Jesus said, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*" (Matthew 5:17). Even in this passage we understand Christ is coming to die for our sins and from His first day on earth the journey is mapped according to the law of God. His parents were walking Him in the footsteps of the law. Our Lord showed us that He lives with this determination when He said in His adulthood: "*But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!*" (Luke 12:50).

II. A Wonderful Tradition

Luke 2:42 introduces to us that customs were important to God and to the family in which He placed His Son. Customs can be a great means of introducing children to the Gospel. When we practice the two church ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, eventually your children who attend these ceremonies with you will ask what they mean and why we do them. This affords the perfect time to teach the Gospel. Paul said, "*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (II Timothy 3:15).

III. A Wonderful Trust

Luke 2:43 speaks to us of a trust that even at the age of twelve our Lord has instilled within the hearts of Joseph and Mary. They never had to worry about Jesus misbehaving. Jesus can still be trusted to do right and to do right by you. *"The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him"* (Nahum 1:7).

IV. A Wonderful Guidance

In Luke 2:44-46a, 48 Mary and Joseph sought Jesus with their own logic first. They went a day's journey out, a day's journey back, then a day looking for Jesus and finally after three days they found Him. This is a good reminder that God wants us to be in fellowship with Jesus more than we want to be in fellowship with Him. When we lay aside our human logic and long after Him, God will guide us. May we pray like the remnant left in Judah: *"That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do"* (Jeremiah 42:3). If we pray that prayer in sincerity, we will discover the promise of God is true: *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye"* (Psalm 32:8).

V. A Wonderful Mind

In Luke 2: 46b and 47 Jesus was respectful, but He could more easily discern the answers to His own questions than did the doctors of law.

Child prodigies are amazing. Blaise Pascal, the 17th-century Frenchman was doing complex geometric proofs at age 12. By 16 he had his own theorem and was associating with prominent French mathematicians. He even invented an early mechanical calculator, called the Pascaline at the age of 19. By the time of his death, Pascal had moved beyond mathematics to become a philosopher, theologian and writer. Today, he's known as much for being an expert in those fields as he is for being a mathematician. Although he lived to be only thirty-nine years old, he left us with Pascal's wager, which broken down says, if you believe in God and God does exist, you will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven: thus an infinite gain. If you do not believe in God and God does exist, you will be condemned to remain in hell forever: thus an infinite loss.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at four began music lessons with his violinist

father. At five he composed minuets. At six he was a virtuoso on the violin and harpsichord and toured with his older sister, creating a sensation in European courts with this phenomenal ability to sight-read music and improvise at six. He wrote his first symphonies at eight. He wrote so prolifically that it is hard to get the total number of pieces that he composed in his short life of thirty-five years.

It was reported that William James Sidis had an IQ of 250 to 300 and could read before he was 2. Born in 1898, Sidis spoke multiple languages and was a mathematical genius and started Harvard at 11, becoming a professor before he was 20.

Akrit Jaswal was reading Shakespeare at five years of age and performing surgery at the ripe age of seven years. These days, Jaswal says he's focused on trying to find a cure for cancer.

With an IQ around 210, Kim Ung-Yong was talking at five months and writing at seven months. When he was four years old he was fluent in Korean, English, Japanese and German and he was solving intricate calculus problems on Japanese television before his fifth birthday. He started university courses at age 3, eventually heading stateside to help out NASA and get his Ph.D, all this before the average child has graduated high school. He now resides back in Korea, where he's a college professor.

I am convinced if they had had formal measurements of a child's intelligence and ability that Christ was the most gifted child that ever lived. All the so-called child prodigies would pale when compared to Him. Consider how brilliant Adam was, who in a very brief amount of time was able to name the entire animal kingdom. The fall of man after sin was so traumatic that every area of man's life was affected, even his intelligence. Do you realize, Christ, second Adam did not have a fallen nature? Only Heaven will reveal the masterpiece of mentality that was and is housed in the person of Jesus, the Christ! Oh, that today our youth would come under the effect of total surrender to this Lord and experience the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5).

VI. A Wonderful Transcendence

Luke 2:49 discloses that Christ understands Who He is, i.e., the Son of God. In that day to declare yourself the Son of God was in the Jewish understanding making yourself equal with God (which He was). The Jews sought to kill Jesus because He "...said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18b). Our Lord distances Himself from Mary and

Joseph, placing Him at home in the Temple, which was the house of God. This was God's house; therefore as God, He was at home. We see this even more pronounced later in Christ's ministry as illustrated in Luke 11:27, 28; John 2:4 and Matthew 12:46-50.

VII. A Wonderful Treasure

Luke 2:51 shows us that we, like Mary, can and should treasure what Jesus had commanded us. Never lose an experience with our Lord through mediocrity.

VIII. A Wonderful Challenge

Finally, we should compare Luke 2:52 with Hebrews 5:8, 9. Have you ever thought, since the main purpose of the Son of God's visitation to earth was to die for our sins, then why live in this dark, fallen world for thirty-three years? Why not just come down for a week, make the triumphant entry, clean out the Temple, institute the Lord's Table, pray in the garden, die, be buried, rise again and get it over with? The purpose of the length of time on the earth was so that He could live a full span of human existence and suffer through the temptations and learn like a man the obedience and obey like only God can obey in perfection. Therefore, when the time came to die, He could be our perfect substitute. God, the Father treated Jesus as though He had lived our life when He died on the cross. Now as a result of that death, God, the Father treats me as though I have lived Jesus' life! So evangelistically speaking, I cry out to the unbelievers, repent! believe! And to the believers, I give you Peter's further challenge: *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (I Peter 2:21).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.