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#### 4 Following the Messiah: The Family Trip to Jerusalem

##### Opening:

1. You have already viewed the video "Following the Messiah Episode 2 (the second half) at [www.appianmedia.org](http://www.appianmedia.org). and have worked through the study guide (Lesson Four) available at [www.appianmedia.org/free-download](http://www.appianmedia.org/free-download).
2. In this study we will focus on Jesus' visit to Jerusalem when he was 12 years old.

**Into the Text:** Reading of Lk. 2:41-51

1. It was customary for Israelites to go to Jerusalem at Feast times. The three major feasts were Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. You can read about the first Passover in Exodus 12-13.

THE JEWISH SACRED YEAR		
MONTH		SPECIAL DAYS
Nisan	(April)	14 – Passover 15 – Unleavened Bread 21 – Close of Passover
Iyar	(May)	
Sivan	(June)	6 – Feast of Pentecost – seven weeks after the Passover (Anniversary of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai)
Tammuz	(July)	
Ab	(August)	
Elul	(September)	
Tishri	(October)	1 & 2 – The Feast of Trumpets <i>Rosh Hashanah</i> , beginning of the civil year 10 – Day of Atonement 15-21 – Feast of Tabernacles
Marchesvan	(November)	
Kislev	(December)	25 – Feast of Lights, Dedication, <i>Hanukkah</i>
Tebeth	(January)	
Shebet	(February)	
Adar	(March)	14 – The Feast of Purim

This chart is from Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, "Feasts," by J. P. Lewis, vol. 2, p. 525.

The Passover was first instituted when God delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery. God instructed the Israelites to place the blood of a lamb on their lintel and on the doorposts of their houses. That night the death angel passed over Egypt. All the firstborn in Egypt died, but the firstborn in all Israel where the blood was placed on their doorposts were spared.

The Passover became a feast of remembrance. God said, "It shall be when your son asks you in time to come saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. It came about when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:14-16).

2. You can imagine Jesus' family teaching him about the Passover, reminding him about what it meant and perhaps reminding him that he was the firstborn in their family and that he had been redeemed at this very temple when he was only 8 days old (Lk. 2:22-24).

3. The family traveled in a caravan with friends and relatives from Nazareth. When it came time to return to Nazareth Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem thinking that Jesus was with others in the caravan. One day out they began looking for him, but did not find him.

Have you ever lost one of your children? Believe me I know the terror! Our son Daniel when he was 2 years old escaped the chain link fence in the back yard. When we noticed he was not there we began diligently searching, walking up and down the streets until exhausted, taking the car and driving up and down the streets. We were about to call the Police when I heard the neighbor's TV playing and noticed there were no cars in their driveway. When I look through their back door there he was in their house watching TV.

The text says, "After 3 days they found him." Where was he for 3 days? Where did he sleep? What did he eat?

When they found him he was in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. Some interpret this to mean that he was teaching the rabbis. In your study guide one paragraph was headed, "Jesus Demonstrated Supernatural Wisdom." I don't know exactly what they mean by that. Is this a claim that Jesus had some kind of miraculous knowledge or that he had divine wisdom as a result of being deity, or did his wisdom come from the revelation contained in Scripture? The text says, "He was listening to them and asking them questions." Those who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his

answers. So, he was answering questions, but probably as a student rather than as an instructor, although he may have actually taught the teachers a thing or two.

4. Joseph and Mary were astonished. I am sure I would have been too. Mary asked, "Why have you treated us this way?" Can't you imagine a mother in this circumstance? "What's going on here son? Don't you know we have been scared out of our wits looking for you?"

I am not sure I would have been so "calm." It was a 3 day trip back to Nazareth if they were walking 20-25 miles per day. Jerusalem (3800 feet above sea level) was 3,400 feet above Nazareth (358 feet above sea level). Their one day hike back was likely difficult. I have never made this trek but I suppose it was uphill. Their arrival back home is going to be delayed now by some days. What about the carpentry business? What about the added expense? What about the emotional stress?

Some estimate the population of Jerusalem at the time to be between 80,000-100,000, but during the Passover perhaps 2,000,000-4,000,000. Lots of people and lots of movement, how would they find him, assuming that he was OK?

Now while Jesus may be exhibiting great knowledge and understanding with the teachers it would seem he is acting in a way typical of a 12 year old in some ways. He said, "Why is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house (about my Father's affairs)?"

Twelve year olds often demonstrate high levels of maturity on one hand and high levels of immaturity on the other. Luke observes that his parents did not understand the statement he made to them. Jesus does not seem to understand why they were anxiously looking for him. Not the first or the last time that parents and children have failed to understand one another.

5. Luke says, "He went down with them to Nazareth and continued in subjection, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart."

6. Luke summarizes, "And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." He increased intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially.

### **Application:**

1. What insights have you gained from this study? How might Jesus' life been different if they had just stayed home? What does their travel to Jerusalem reveal about Joseph and Mary's faith?

2. What questions have been answered for you? What questions have been raised that will need your further investigation?

3. How does this text help you understand something about who Jesus is? What did you learn about the nature of his relationship with God? Did he see himself as one serving the purpose of God? Explain.
4. When you think of Jesus' humanness and the humanness of his parents what tensions do you see here? How does this account affect you as a parent? As a child?
5. Do your goals as a parent involve intellectual development, physical development, spiritual development and social development for your children?
6. What will you do differently as a child, as a parent, as a student of God's word, as an instructor in God's word, as a result of this account?