

Lesson 43: The Circumstances Surrounding the Birth and Early Life of Jesus, the Messiah

A. Introduction:

Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year. When I was a little kid, I couldn't even get to sleep on Christmas eve because I was so excited and couldn't wait to open the presents under the tree. It was also around this time that I discovered the sad truth about Santa. Instead of seeing Santa delivering my new bike, I peeked out my bedroom door and saw my father putting my bike together. Here's a brief clip of me and my brother on Christmas day. The sad reality for me and my brother is that Christmas for us had nothing to do with Jesus. I grew up in a home where we never talked about Jesus or God, and I never ever associated Christmas with the birth of Jesus.

Here's something that will surprise you--Christmas has its origins in the 4th Century. In other words, it wasn't until about 300 yrs or more after the birth of Jesus that Christians began celebrating Christmas. After the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity at the Milvian Bridge in 312, he sought to combine the worship of the sun god with worship of Christ. From the earliest days of the Roman empire, they celebrated the pagan holiday Saturnalia, which was the Roman festival for their god Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture and ran from about December 17–23. In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, the god of the unconquerable sun, on December 25.

The other important thing to note is that Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus, which is the English transliteration from Greek, was not even born on Dec. 25. Most accounts believe that He would've been born in the fall, in either Sept. or October. And secondly, there's no direct biblical commandment to celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25.

In the early days of Christianity, Christians did not celebrate Christmas at all. By holding Christmas at the same time as traditional winter solstice festivals, the Catholic Church increased the chances that Christmas would be popularly embraced.

But getting back to the birth of Jesus and John, what most people don't know is all the mystery, drama and intrigue that was taking place behind the scenes. There were some who did not want Jesus or John to be born, and steps were taken to try to send the baby Jesus to an early grave. In this lesson, we will look at the backdrop for the birth of Jesus as well as provide some added insight into more well-known actors like the Three Wise Men.

Stay with me as well examine in chronological order the miraculous birth of Yeshua, or as Gentiles know him, Jesus, the Messiah.

In Lesson 42, we saw the lives of the barren, old Elisabeth and the young virgin Mary intersect at the point of God's unexpected favor to His humble servants. Elisabeth was from the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5) and was also related to Mary (Luke 1:36). Because Elizabeth was barren and elderly, the birth of John the Baptist is presented by Luke as a special work of God.

Luke implies that John was born 6 months before Jesus and that the two were relatives. If Jesus and John the Baptist were related, why did John not recognize Jesus at the time of his baptism (John 1:31)? Some think that the Baptist knew Jesus, but did not recognize Him as the Messiah. It is highly likely that because John was raised in the wilderness of Judea (Luke 1:80), and Jesus was raised in Nazareth of Galilee—that during their early years, they were separated by quite a distance, possibly distant enough to be unfamiliar with each other as adults.

B. Birth of John the Baptist

Now you may remember from our last lesson that Zacharias and Elizabeth were both old and advanced in age, and Elizabeth was barren and could not have a child, which was a shameful thing in those days. But the Bible says that they were both blameless and walked righteously in the sight of God. Now Zacharias was a priest and one day, by drawing lots, he was chosen to go into the temple to offer incense to the Lord while everyone remained outside praying. While he is in the temple, an angel of the Lord appears to him and tells him that his wife, Elizabeth, is pregnant and will bear a son whose name is John, and many will rejoice at his birth. The angel tells him that John will turn many Sons of Israel back to their God. Well Zacharias is in shock and also still in some unbelief and he says to the angel, “How will I know for certain that all this will happen?” The angel says that because of your unbelief, you will not be able to speak until this child is born.”

And let’s pick up the story in Luke 1:57...

57 Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. 58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

59 So it was, on the eighth day that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60 His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.” 61

Here’s that very scene as depicted in the Nativity Story ([show video clip with sound](#))

But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” 62 So they made signs to his father— what he would have him called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. 65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Herod’s Kingdom at Jesus’ Birth

Born in Idumea, Herod the Great was a Jew by religion, but was also immersed in Greek culture and politically loyal to Rome. The Roman emperor Augustus Caesar appointed Herod over a kingdom including the regions of Idumea, Judea, Samaria, among others.

C. Zacharias's Prophecy

67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, 71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. 76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." 80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

D. From Abraham to The Messiah

Matthew chapter 1 records the genealogy of Jesus. Now genealogy has become a big deal today with websites like Ancestry.com. Many folks want to know something of their background and how far back they can trace it. Well, the fact is that you can trace your ancestry back to Adam & Eve, and if you are a believer, you can trace your spiritual heritage back to Abraham, the father of all those who are in the faith.

Well, the big deal regarding the reason for Matthew tracing the genealogy of Jesus, was to show Jews that Jesus, Yeshua, was the Son of David, and he came from the lineage of King David. Now why is this important? Because the Messiah was prophesied to come from the line of King David. The prophets said that from King David, there would come a ruler who would rule on the throne throughout all eternity. So here is Yeshua's genealogy as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: 2 Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. 4 Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. 5 Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, 6 and Jesse begot David the king.

Culture & Society

An honorable genealogy was necessary for a person to have a place in society. The genealogy given by Matthew and in v. 7 Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.

And then, if we skip down to v. 16 And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Messiah. 17

So Matthew records all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ Messiah are fourteen generations. These periods represent the eras when God's people were governed by a particular style of leadership: prophets, princes (kings) and priests.

But you notice how careful the Bible is to say that **Yeshua is not begotten by Joseph**, but says instead, **“Joseph was the husband of this Mary of whom was born Jesus, Yeshua.”**

Matthew chooses to give the genealogy of Joseph's ancestors. We may think there's nothing unusual about that – until we recall that Jesus was not *physically* related to Joseph. Why not follow Luke in giving Mary's ancestry? Because to a Jewish mind it was the *legal rights* that mattered, and they came through the father.

Luke shows us how Mary was a direct lineal descendant from the great King David. So the Lord Jesus Christ is of the seed of David, through His mother Mary.

Transition: The Birth of Jesus

No one knows precisely when Jesus was born. Even His year of birth is only an educated guess based on the information available. The intention of the medieval creators of our calendar was to set the date of Jesus' birth at A.D. 1. They simply miscalculated. The Jewish historian Josephus places the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C., and both Matthew (Matt. 2: 1) and Luke (Luke 1: 5) presume that Herod was king at the time of Jesus' birth. But it is not clear how much before Herod's death Jesus was born.

E. The Virgin Birth

Matthew tells us, starting in 1: 18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

Betrayal and Betrothal

The engagement of Mary and Joseph (Matt. 1: 18) involved much more than engagement does today. Even though a young Jewish man was considered an adult around age 13, he would work for a few years to save up for his marriage, around the age of 18 or 20. After the making of a legal contract between the two families, the young man and the woman (who was normally between the ages of 12 and 16) were “betrothed.”

Here is a scene from the Nativity Story where Joseph can't wait to see Mary who has been away visiting her cousin Elizabeth, maybe six months or longer. He rushes up to her, but then he is shocked by the sight of her being pregnant. [\(show video clip\)](#).

In that scene, you can only imagine the heartbreak, the humiliation, and dishonor that Joseph felt. He's in love with Mary and as far as he knows, while she's been gone, she's taken up with another man. The

fact that Mary became pregnant after their betrothal or engagement, **but before their wedding**, prompted Joseph “to put her away” or divorce her (Matt. 1: 19). A betrothed or engaged couple could not sleep together before the wedding. In fact, Galilean parents normally kept the man and woman from spending time together privately until the wedding (normally a year after betrothal). Therefore, Joseph would not have known Mary very well, and he certainly had no sexual relations with her, and we can’t blame him for mistrusting her and deciding to end the engagement. Here’s another scene from The Nativity Story where Joseph asks Mary’s parents to leave the room so that he can talk with her alone and express his sadness and pain over what he believes she has done to him. (show scene).

The commitment of a betrothal was so legally binding that a divorce was required to break it off (1: 19). Joseph had little choice. If a man’s betrothed wife became pregnant, people would assume that she had regarded him as an inadequate man and this would publicly humiliate him. Worse yet, should he not divorce her most people would assume that he was the one who had gotten her pregnant, and he would bear great shame in a culture that was obsessed with shame and honor. Jewish law required a man to divorce a wife who had been unfaithful.

Joseph could have divorced Mary publicly in a court. The court would not only establish his innocence, but also profit him financially: he would get to keep all of Mary’s dowry (the money her father gave her for her marriage). By planning to divorce her privately (writing out a certificate of divorce for her in front of two witnesses), Joseph elected to forfeit profit rather than shame her any further. So I want you to see that Joseph was an honorable man—a good man, and even when he felt that Mary had betrayed him and humiliated and shamed him, he did not want to publicly shame or humiliate her—he didn’t even want to benefit financially from her dowry.

Joseph would have divorced Mary quietly except for one thing: While he’s asleep one night, Gabriel appeared to him. Now in the film, The Nativity Story, they depict him having a dream where a crowd has gathered around Mary to stone her and Joseph actually find himself ready to join them, but he is stopped by Gabriel the angel of the Lord who then speaks to him. Now this dream of Joseph being ready to join the crowd in stoning Mary is just speculation and fiction. It’s not in the Bible. But it seems like something that could’ve happened, where in his subconscious mind while dreaming, maybe there was a part of him that was so angry that he might have joined this angry mob that was attacking Mary. But then, the angel Gabriel steps in and let’s Joseph know what’s really going on. Take a look at this **scene from Nativity Story**.

Now let’s pick up the story in Matthew 1:20 to learn about how Joseph is clued in by God as to what is going on:

Matthew 1:20-25

²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

²¹ "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins." (Notice that the Messiah’s name is explained on the basis of what he will do, which is ‘save His people

from their sins.')

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife,

²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus, or more accurately, Yeshua.

F. The Messiah Is Born to Mary

Luke records the circumstances that necessitated Mary and Joseph being forced to travel to Bethlehem. Because Joseph and Mary trace their lineage to King David, Caesar Augustus' decree required them to make an approximately 80-mile trek from their home in Nazareth to David's hometown of Bethlehem. This is a major inconvenience and an arduous journey which is accurately depicted in the 2006 film, "The Nativity Story." If you haven't seen this outstanding film, I urge you to do so. It will make so much of what I'm talking about here come alive. This film is an accurate account of the birth of Yeshua, the Messiah, and as we seen in the film, it was no easy journey for Mary and Joseph traveling 80 miles to Bethlehem. [Here's a scene of what their arduous journey might've looked like.](#)

And also, what I pick up on every time I see this film is that you can be in the center of God's perfect will, and who more so than Mary and Joseph and the son of God that she is carrying in her womb, and yet, their trip is not easy, and they suffered from hunger and thirst, and then, when arriving in Bethlehem, there is no place for Mary to give birth to her child.

We're talking about giving birth to the Son of God. He could've been born in the Bethlehem Hilton or Bethlehem Westin Hotel. God could have arranged for his son to be born in the palace of a king, but no, he is brought into the world in a stable. What I want you to see, and if you see the film, *The Nativity Story*, which is available on Netflix, or Hulu, or through your local library, you'll see that even when you are in the center of God's will, things aren't necessary a piece of cake, things don't just easily fall into place. That's something for us to keep in mind as we read the Scriptural account of the birth of the Messiah.s

Continuing on, Luke tells us that:

Luke 2:8-20 (ESV)

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

- ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”
- ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”
- ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.
- ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.
- ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.
- ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.
- ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Here’s what that might have looked like as seen in the film, *The Nativity Story*.

Augustus, the First Roman Emperor

(Luke 2: 1) Luke refers to “Caesar Augustus” as the Roman emperor who ruled the Mediterranean world during the birth and youth of Jesus (Luke 2: 1)

Glory in the Highest

Luke tells us that the announcement of the birth of the Savior of the world was given first to some poor, lowly shepherds. The first ones to be told about the birth of the Messiah were not of royalty, no Hollywood elite, none of the Martha’s Vineyard jet set....no, so atypical of what men do, God announces the birth of his Son to some poor, lowly, smelly, despised shepherds. On the social ladder, shepherds ranked at the very bottom. Now, here is another reason why the account of the birth of the Messiah by Luke is not something that man conjured up or made up because we don’t make up stories like this—we don’t create a Savior, or hero-figure who is born in a stable, and then we don’t have the announcement made to those who are despised, and are never invited to any social gathering. This alone tells me that what we’re reading about, came not from Luke’s imagination, but he was just the historian accurately writing down everything exactly as it occurred. As the famous sports announcer Al Michaels says: “You can’t make this up!”

Here’s a brief clip of how this is depicted in the *Nativity Story*.

Transition: Jesus Presented in the Temple

Luke indicates that “eight days were completed” for the circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2: 21). Since the Jews considered the day of birth as the first day, this would be 7 days by our way of counting. The mother of a newborn son was deemed ceremonially unclean for 7 days (Lev. 12: 2), after which the parents had to take the child to the temple for circumcision.

Circumcision of Jesus

Luke 2: 21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, a His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Jesus Presented To God

Luke 2:22-24 (ESV)

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)

²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”

Simeon Sees God’s Salvation

Luke 2:25-38 (ESV)

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,

²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation

³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed

³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Anna Bears Witness To the Redeemer

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,

³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

G. The Wise Men From the East

Show video clip of them gazing at the star

Chronologically, it’s probably inaccurate to place the shepherds and the wise men side by side. And while we’re on the subject, the little drummer boy is absent from all the gospel accounts on Jesus’ birth.

(show scene from Nativity Story of wise men traveling)

The 3 wise men eventually make their way to Jerusalem to ask King Herod, the Roman appointed ruler of the Jews, where the king of the Jews has been born. Herod, as you might imagine, is not too happy to

hear about this rival claimant to the throne, even if the rival may still be in diapers. When Herod's officials inform him that the Messiah is supposed to be born in Bethlehem, Herod passes on this information to the wise men, and he asks them to return with news of the child's exact whereabouts, so he too can worship Him, or better put, kill him.

Let's read:

Matthew 2:1-12 (ESV)

- 1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,
- 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."
- 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;
- 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
- 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:
- 6 "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"
- 7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.
- 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."
- 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.
- 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
- 11 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
- 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

The wise men continue on their way to Bethlehem, where they find Jesus. However after they present their gifts to Jesus, they are warned in a dream not to return to Herod because he only intends to kill this newborn king, the son of God. When Herod finds out that the wise men have left his territory without reporting back to him, he becomes furious and dispatches his soldiers to kill all the male children in the vicinity of Bethlehem from two years of age and under. Historically, this is known as the "Slaughter of the Innocents."

H. The Flight Into Egypt

The visit of the wise men occurred some months after the birth of Jesus. Joseph and Mary were no longer in the stable, but living in a house (see Matt. 2: 11) in Bethlehem, a village about 5 miles south of

Jerusalem. The family fled from there to Egypt to escape the plot of Herod, who apparently feared the new King would replace him.

Herod died in 4 B.C., and Matt. 2: 16, 19 suggests that Jesus may have been one to two years old at that time (see “The Birth of Jesus” at Matt. 1: 18). Herod’s death meant that Joseph could take his young Child and wife Mary back to Israel (Matt. 2: 19– 21).

I. Early Lives of John the Baptist and Jesus

Elizabeth and Mary, the mothers of John and Jesus, were either blood relatives or close kinswomen (Luke 1:36). The angel Gabriel appeared to both families—to Elizabeth’s husband and to Mary herself and announced their future sons: John and Jesus. Even before birth, these babies were named and set apart for unique missions.

Practically nothing is known of John’s boyhood, except that Luke records that he “grew and became strong in spirit” Only slightly more is known of Jesus’ upbringing. Early in His life Jesus was taken to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, and there raised by His mother, Mary, and her husband, Joseph, a carpenter by trade. Hence the Child was known as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Mark 1: 24).

Jesus was His mother’s firstborn child; he had four brothers (James, Joses, Judas, and Simon) and an unspecified number of sisters (Mark 6: 3). The only incident preserved from His first 30 years was His trip to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary when He was 12 years old. Occurring in the year that, as a Jewish boy, He attained the age of religious responsibility, the trip was at a crucial juncture of His development.

Evidently, this is all God determined that we needed to know. There are some extra-Biblical writings which contain stories of Jesus’ youth (the Gospel of Thomas, for example). But we have no way of knowing whether any of these stories are true and reliable. God chose not to tell us much about Jesus’ childhood – so we have to just trust Him that nothing occurred which we need to know about.

J. Jesus Visits the Temple

The gospel of Luke says that when Jesus is 12 yrs old, his family and relatives go to Jerusalem for their annual celebration of the Passover—a feast commemorating Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery. After the week-long festivities, Jesus’ family packs up their belongings and begins the long journey home. After the first day of travel, Mary and Joseph realize that Jesus isn’t with them. Now, it’s important to remember that Joseph and Mary are traveling with an extended family, and they probably assume that Jesus is with one of his cousins’ families.

Mary and Joseph hurry back to Jerusalem and, after three days of searching, they finally find Jesus at the Temple, listening to and questioning the Jewish priests and religious authorities.

K. The Boy Yeshua Amazes the Scholars

Luke 2:45-52 (ESV)

45 and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

50 And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

After 3 days of fervently searching for Jesus, they finally find him at the Temple, listening to and questioning the Jewish priests and religious authorities. Jesus shows such insight, in fact, that "everyone was amazed at his great understanding." Mary and Joseph are more annoyed than amazed, and Mary asks, "Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you everywhere?" And Jesus responds, "why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's House? (Luke 2:49).

Jesus' response that the Temple is his "Father's House" is intended to remind his parents (and us as well) that, although Jesus is "born of a woman," he is ultimately of divine origin, which sets the stage for his miracles and teachings which we'll examine in upcoming lessons.

Next Lesson 44: God Sent John to Teach and Baptize; John Baptized Jesus