

Week #:	248	Series:	The Gospels	Title:	Jesus at 12yo
Scriptures:	Deuteronomy 19:15; Luke 2:39-52; Matthew 2:19-23; Matthew 11:28-30; I John 5:3;				
Songs:					

Jesus at 12 Years Old:

We ended last week with the dedication of Jesus at the Temple on his 8th day of life. This was accounted for and witnessed by two individuals – Simeon and Anna. It’s important that at least two witnesses noticed and spoke of who Jesus was. This was because in the Law of Moses, God had told them that everything needed to be witnessed by two or three to establish it as the truth.

Deuteronomy 19:15

¹⁵ “One witness alone will not be sufficient to convict a person of any offense or sin of any kind; the matter will be established only if there are two or three witnesses testifying against him.

God allowing Simeon and Anna to both witness Jesus at the Temple and to speak of Him was setting up the truth of WHO He really was from the beginning, from His birth.

Luke 2:39-40

³⁹ When Yosef and Miryam had finished doing everything required by the *Torah* of *ADONAI*, they returned to the Galil, to their town Natzeret [Nazareth].

⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong and filled with wisdom — God’s favor was upon him.

We know from the account written in Matthew that some events are left out here in Luke’s account. He does not tell of the Magi and their visit, nor of the flight to Egypt by Joseph and Mary to save the life of their baby. We will find as we go through the four Gospels that not every event is recorded in each of them. The question naturally arises — why did Luke leave this story out of his account? We cannot know for certain, but perhaps it is because it was not crucial to Luke’s theme. Luke does not dwell on any of the ministry of Jesus that took place outside of Palestine. He does not mention the ministry in Decapolis or Samaria or Phoenicia. Although he records the events which took place in Caesarea, he does not mention it by name. Luke will describe the progress of the ministry of the gospel in those other countries when he writes the book of Acts. At that time he will deal with the gospel going to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. However, for now his focus is on the Lord’s covenant community who live in Israel.

Matthew 2:19-23

¹⁹ After Herod’s death, an angel of *ADONAI* appeared in a dream to Yosef in Egypt ²⁰ and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to *Eretz-Yisra’el [land of Israel]*, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.”

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and went back to *Eretz-Yisra’el [land of Israel]*.

²² However, when he heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Y’udah [Judah], he was afraid to go there. Warned in a dream, he withdrew to the Galil [Galilee] ²³ and settled in a town called Natzeret [Nazareth], so that what had been spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he will be called a *Natzrati [Nazarene]*.

Matthew records the events which Luke does not record. They both say, however, that when the events had taken place, the family settled back in Nazareth, where Jesus grew in strength and wisdom.

Our next look at Jesus is in Luke 2 where we see Jesus as a 12-year-old boy.

Luke 2:41

⁴¹ Every year Yeshua’s parents went to Yerushalayim [Jerusalem] for the festival of *Pesach*. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up for the festival, as custom required.

All Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage feasts: Passover (Pesach), Shavu'ot (Pentecost), and Sukkot. (Women and children were not required to go, but it seems to indicate here that Mary joined each year, and so would the children have joined if she went.) They then spent the week participating in the traditions of Passover – picking the lamb for the sacrifice, the special meal, making the sacrifice, etc. Jerusalem went from about 200k people to about 2 million during this festival.

Luke 2:43-44

⁴³ But after the festival was over, when his parents returned, Yeshua remained in Yerushalayim [Jerusalem]. They didn't realize this; ⁴⁴ supposing that he was somewhere in the caravan, they spent a whole day on the road before they began searching for him among their relatives and friends.

They traveled in groups or caravans when going to Jerusalem. This was because the regions of Galilee in the north and Judea in the south were separated by the region of Samaria, and it was not safe to travel through that region alone. The distance from Jerusalem to Nazareth is about 80 miles, so it would take 3-5 days for the group to walk this distance, possibly more if they were traveling in the heat of summer (Shavu'ot). They didn't realize Jesus was not with them until they set up camp for the night.

SAMARIA is the province between **GALILEE** and **JUDEA**. These were the people that had intermarried when the Assyrian captivity happened and had blended the true religion of God with pagan religion. They were called "half-breeds." Most Jews believed they were not truly in the image of God – that they had given up the image of God when they took on their half-breed beliefs. They were hated by Jews. If you were a Jew and walked through Samaria by yourself, you would be killed. If you were a Samaritan and walked by yourself through Judea or Galilee, you would be killed. It wasn't safe to travel alone through the territory of the other.

So it makes sense that they would travel for their pilgrimage feasts in groups or caravans. It provided safety on the road, and companionship while going to and from Jerusalem.

When they found Jesus was missing, they checked all the usual places – with his family and with his friends. He wasn't there. Can you imagine the torment they went through in those hours while searching for their missing son?

Luke 2:45-46a

⁴⁵ Failing to find him, they returned to Yerushalayim [Jerusalem] to look for him. ⁴⁶ On the third day they found him —

After traveling for a whole day, then looking for him the second day amongst their friends and family, they finally head back to Jerusalem to look for him. The city is not as full as it was a few days before, but it still has a surge of people compared to its usual size. They went to all the usual places again, looking for him.

Luke 2:46-47

⁴⁶ On the third day they found him — he was sitting in the Temple court among the rabbis, not only listening to them but questioning what they said; ⁴⁷ and everyone who heard him was astonished at his insight and his responses.

He was finally found in the Temple courts sitting amongst the rabbis and having some insightful discussions with them.

In Jesus' day there were many rabbis. The word RABBI means "honored person/honored one." Rabbi in that day was not an office, it was not a title; you didn't get ordained and you didn't get a degree. It simply meant that because of your Godliness and your wisdom you were honored by others.

There are two kinds of rabbis (which we will get into more in a later lesson). With one, it was accepted that they had the authority to come up with new teachings. This method of interpretation by which they reached their new teachings was called their YOKE OF TORAH. Torah is the first five books of the Bible – God’s law given to Moses. The yoke is the way you take the burden of keeping Torah (or the “delight of keeping Torah”) on your shoulders. You do it according to your rabbi’s method. Every rabbi had a different yoke. If you ever wanted to know what a rabbi’s yoke was, you would ask of him, “*What is the greatest commandment?*” The answer to this will tell you what his yoke is. What is Jesus’ yoke? He is asked what is the most important command in the Torah, and he answers his disciples with this:

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ “Rabbi, which of the *mitzvot* in the *Torah* is the most important?” ³⁷ He told him, “**You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.**” ³⁸ This is the greatest and most important *mitzvah*. ³⁹ And a second is similar to it, **‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’** ⁴⁰ All of the *Torah* and the Prophets are dependent on these two *mitzvot*.”

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are struggling and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take **my yoke** upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For **my yoke** is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jesus’ yoke was much easier than that of some other rabbis – especially the Pharisees. The “yoke of the Pharisees” is the burdensome yoke of self-righteousness and legalistic law-keeping. It has been said by biblical scholars that the Pharisees had added over 600 regulations regarding what qualified as “working” on the Sabbath. That is a heavy burden for anyone to have to bear.

I John 5:3

³ For loving God means obeying his commands. Moreover, his commands are not burdensome, So Jesus’ yoke is love – God first and then others. While love is, on the surface, an easy concept, it is also the most difficult to live out. Jesus yoke was easier in that it did not rely so heavily on the legalism that other rabbis (the Pharisees) kept as the most important commands of the Torah, but it is far from easy.

Charles Spurgeon said in his writing on September 2, 1886:

“Christ has a yoke for us to wear, so let us wear it seriously; but it is an easy yoke, so let us wear it hopefully. He has a burden for us to carry for him, so let us be in earnest in bearing it; but it is a light burden, so let us be full of joy at the very prospect of carrying it. Our Saviour’s adjectives are always emphatic, and they are especially so here. His ‘yoke is easy’ — easy in the fullest sense; and his ‘burden is light’ — light in the most joyous meaning of the term lightness.”

There is a rabbinical custom that we see often throughout Jesus’ ministry, in which the disciples of one rabbi would be sent to ask a question of another rabbi. This is called “testing the yoke” or “destroying the yoke” of the other rabbi. Jesus defended his yoke several times throughout scripture. In this rabbinical exchange of defending or testing one’s yoke, questions are exchanged back and forth, either with the rabbi or with his disciples. (As followers of this rabbi, they should be knowledgeable of his particular yoke.)

Question #1 is asked of the rabbi, his answer is given in the form of Question #2. This question always answers #1, but takes it to a deeper level. Sometimes the rabbi will turn to his disciples and ask the question of them, at which time they will start debating scriptures back and forth to come up with their answer. This exchange can sometimes go on for hours between the disciples of different rabbis.

We find these exchanges of testing the yoke throughout the Gospels, but one exchange that explains this method well is found in Matthew.

Matthew 12:1-8

¹ One *Shabbat* during that time, Yeshua was walking through some wheat fields. His *talmidim* [disciples] were hungry, so they began picking heads of grain and eating them. ² On seeing this, the *P'rushim* [Pharisee] said to him, "Look! Your *talmidim* [disciples] are violating *Shabbat*!" ³ But he said to them, "Haven't you ever read what David did when he and those with him were hungry? ⁴ He entered the House of God and ate the Bread of the Presence!" — which was prohibited, both to him and to his companions; it is permitted only to the *Cohanim* [priests]. ⁵ "Or haven't you read in the *Torah* that on *Shabbat* the *Cohanim* [priests] profane *Shabbat* and yet are blameless? ⁶ I tell you, there is in this place something greater than the Temple! ⁷ If you knew what '**I want compassion rather than animal-sacrifice**' meant, you would not condemn the innocent. ⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord of *Shabbat*!"

Jesus was confronted about his disciples "working on the sabbath." If you remember, this was one of those big ten commands. God put a lot of emphasis on it in the Torah, and one in which the Pharisees held to a very high and strict order in their yoke.

Deuteronomy 5:1; 5:12-15

¹ Then Moshe called to all Isra'el and said to them, "Listen, Isra'el, to the laws and rulings which I am announcing in your hearing today, so that you will learn them and take care to obey them. ¹² "Observe the day of *Shabbat*, to set it apart as holy, as *ADONAI* your God ordered you to do. ¹³ You have six days to labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a *Shabbat* for *ADONAI* your God. On it you are not to do any kind of work — not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your ox, your donkey or any of your other livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property — so that your male and female servants can rest just as you do. ¹⁵ You are to remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and *ADONAI* your God brought you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore *ADONAI* your God has ordered you to keep the day of *Shabbat*."

Exodus 31:12-17

¹² *ADONAI* said to Moshe, ¹³ "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'You are to observe my *Shabbats*; for this is a sign between me and you through all your generations; so that you will know that I am *ADONAI*, who sets you apart for me. ¹⁴ Therefore you are to keep my *Shabbat*, because it is set apart for you. Everyone who treats it as ordinary must be put to death; for whoever does any work on it is to be cut off from his people. ¹⁵ On six days work will get done; but the seventh day is *Shabbat*, for complete rest, set apart for *ADONAI*. Whoever does any work on the day of *Shabbat* must be put to death. ¹⁶ The people of Isra'el are to keep the *Shabbat*, to observe *Shabbat* through all their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ It is a sign between me and the people of Isra'el forever; for in six days *ADONAI* made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and rested.'"

The Pharisees were not wrong in questioning Jesus about his yoke, but they were wrong in their motives for questioning him. They were trying to catch him in something that they could bring to the higher ups that would allow them to bring Him up on charges. Why were they so against Jesus? Because His methods of interpretation of the yoke of God destroyed their own interpretation of the law. Jesus was essentially telling them, in every exchange, that they were not seeing what was most important to God. These very Godly men, who went out of their way to live a life of reverence and honor towards God and His law, were being told by this rabbi that they were not doing what God would want. No wonder they were against Jesus. Their own motives were constantly being brought into question.

If we continue with this exchange of questions in Matthew:

Matthew 12:9-15

⁹ Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue. ¹⁰ A man there had a shriveled hand. Looking for a reason to accuse him of something, they asked him, “Is healing permitted on *Shabbat*?” ¹¹ But he answered, “If you have a sheep that falls in a pit on *Shabbat*, which of you won’t take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore, what is permitted on *Shabbat* is to do good.” ¹³ Then to the man he said, “Hold out your hand.” As he held it out, it became restored, as sound as the other one. ¹⁴ But the *P’rushim* [Pharisees] went out and began plotting how they might do away with Yeshua. ¹⁵ Aware of this, he left that area.

Jesus put more emphasis on the life of a person than on the minutia of the letter of the law. Remember His yoke: love God and love others. Everything else beyond that will work itself out, but He always put emphasis on these two first and foremost.

This exchange of questions and scriptures seems to be what Jesus (at 12 years of age) was doing there in the Temple courts with several rabbis. Remember, all Jewish males had to come to Jerusalem for this feast, and the rabbis from different regions would have gathered to discuss things while they were there at the Temple. Jesus found himself there in the midst of them and not only was he participating in the exchange of questions, he was confounding them with his deep knowledge and insight. He was truly a unique twelve-year-old boy to be able to hold his own amongst these rabbis.

Luke 2:48-50

⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were shocked; and his mother said to him, “Son! Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried looking for you!” ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why did you have to look for me? Didn’t you know that I had to be concerning myself with my Father’s affairs?” ⁵⁰ But they didn’t understand what he meant.

Jesus at this time was still just a boy. In fact, his ministry would not begin until 18 years after this. His parents knew he was special, and Mary especially understood His divinity. But they did not see him yet as the Messiah He would one day be. They still saw him as their little boy. He was not yet of age to be considered a man – that was 13. Jesus understood that they did not see Him yet as the Messiah, and we are given a small indication of His character in this next scripture:

Luke 2:51-52

⁵¹ So he went with them to Natzeret [Nazareth] and was obedient to them. But his mother stored up all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Yeshua grew both in wisdom and in stature, gaining favor both with other people and with God.

Jesus followed his parents back and did not hold over their heads what they didn’t understand. He respected and honored them for their position of being his parents, even if it ended this fun exchange of the beliefs of these rabbis in the Temple. This exchange only fueled him in learning all He could so that when the time came, He would be ready to take on the task set before Him by His Father in Heaven.