

Bible Study
December 5, 2023
Dr. Pierre Cannings
Luke 2:41

I. Customary v.41-42

- a. Feast of Passover
 - i. An Annual Feast celebrating Israel's exit from Egypt
 - ii. celebrated on the 14th of the month Nisan, and continuing into the early hours of the 15th¹
 - iii. Jesus' parents had the pious habit of going to Jerusalem annually for the feast of the passover. οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ is altered in 1012 it for dogmatic reasons (cf. 2:33, 43). Passover was one of the three annual festivals which Jewish men were required to keep in Jerusalem, the others being Pentecost and Tabernacles
 - iv. Hebrews 10:22-25 Do not neglect the assembly of believers
- b. Jesus was 12- Threshold of Adult life
 - i. At the age of 12 a boy was prepared for his entry to the religious community which took place when he was 13
- c. Parents Completed Full Number of Days
 - i. **to complete an activity, complete, bring to an end, finish, accomplish²**

II. Uncustomary v.43-48

- a. Jesus Stayed behind
 - i. Three Days
- b. Found him in the temple 46-48
 - i. Temple
 - 1. "House of God" Possibly where God is believed to dwell.
 - 2. of the temple at Jerusalem, including the whole temple precinct w³. its buildings, courts, etc. ⁴
 - ii. Seated Amongst the Scholars

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 784.

² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 996.

³w. w. = with

⁴ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 470.

- iii. Listening – He was just hearing them
- iv. Asking Questions
 - 1. The second force at work is the memory of Jesus’ human side. In v. 46^{5*} the child possesses no supernatural knowledge; he remains quite human throughout the course of the account. Jesus at twelve thus fits well with the christology of earliest Christianity: he is the Son of God, and a human being.
 - 2. Understanding and Answers
 - 3. but rather probing questions designed to elicit decisions; but the idea of critical encounter is not present here.
- v. Acts 17:10-15 Bereans Received the word with great eagerness-examining scripture
- vi. There were amazed
 - 1. *be amazed, be astonished*, of the feeling of astonishment mingled w⁶. fear, caused by events which are miraculous, extraordinary, or difficult to understand⁷

III. The Real Custom

- a. Why have you treated the this way
 - i. They were looking for him
- b. Jesus Responded
 - i. Why are you looking for me?
 - ii. I had to be in My Father’s House
 - 1. Father’s House- the affairs of my father
 - 2. It is divine compulsion
 - 3. Why are you looking, this is where I should be
 - iii. Dwell in the House of the Lord Ps 84:1-4
- c. Continued in Subjection
 - i. Continued to submit to his parents
- d. Growth
 - i. Spiritual Growth
 - 1. Increased in Wisdom and Stature

^{5*} ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46 (NRSV)

⁶w. w. = with

⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 350.

- a. Wisdom- transcendent wisdom only God **the capacity to understand and function accordingly, *wisdom***⁸
- ii. Physical Growth
 - 1. Stature-
 - a. In Favor of God and me.
 - b. **a beneficent disposition toward someone, *favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill***⁹

⁸ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 934.

⁹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1079.

Word Studies

Amazed - *be amazed, be astonished*, of the feeling of astonishment mingled w¹⁰. fear, caused by events which are miraculous, extraordinary, or difficult to understand¹¹

Temple- of the temple at Jerusalem, including the whole temple precinct w¹². its buildings, courts, etc. ¹³

In a number of languages ἱερόν is rendered normally as ‘the house of God,’ or, as in Ac 19:27, ‘the house of the goddess Artemis.’ In a number of languages, however, there are technical terms for ‘temple,’ and these are often carefully distinguished from an expression designating a central sanctuary in which the deity is thought to dwell (ναός^a). Though in a number of contexts it is not necessary to distinguish between ἱερόν and ναός, in Mt 21:12 (and parallel passages: Mk 11:15, Lk 19:45, and Jn 2:14) it is important to indicate this distinction, so as not to leave the impression that sacrificial animals were actually being sold inside the central sanctuary.¹⁴

Predominantly, however, *hieron* is used for the temple of God at Jerusalem (e.g., Matt 12:6; Mark 13:3; Luke 21:5; 22:52; Acts 24:6; 25:8). The word is generally used in reference to the whole temple complex, conveying the concept of sacred space that includes the entire temple precinct with its buildings, courts, walls, gates, and even the temple hill (e.g., Matt 21:12, 14, 23; 24:1; Mark 11:11, 15; Luke 19:45; John 2:14; 10:23).

ναός (*naos*). n. masc. **temple**. *An architectural term used to describe a building regarded as a dwelling place of a deity.*¹⁵

Feast of the Passover

¹⁰w. w. = with

¹¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 350.

¹²w. w. = with

¹³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 470.

¹⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 82.

¹⁵ Sunhee Kim, [*“Sacred Space.”*](#) ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

① **an annual Israelite festival commemorating Israel’s exodus from Egypt, the**

Passover, celebrated on the 14th of the month Nisan, and continuing into the early hours of the 15th¹⁶

51.6 πάσχα^a n: the Jewish festival commemorating the deliverance of Jews from Egypt—‘Passover festival, Passover.’ ἔστιν δὲ συνήθεια ὑμῖν ἵνα ἓνα ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ πάσχα ‘according to your custom, I always set free a prisoner for you during the Passover’ Jn 18:39. In some languages the term πάσχα has been borrowed in one form or another, but frequently it is necessary to have some qualifying statement to identify this festival, for example, ‘a festival to celebrate the passing over of the angel’ or ‘a festival to celebrate deliverance from Egypt.’¹⁷

Complete Number of Days **to complete an activity, complete, bring to an end, finish, accomplish**¹⁸

Commentary Studies

g. The Passover Visit of Jesus to the Temple (2:41–52)

The birth story comes to a climax with an account of an incident which took place when (by Jewish standards) Jesus was on the threshold of adult life. It illustrates the wisdom which he displayed in religious discussions even at this early age (2:40; R. Laurentin^{19*}, 135–141; Christ, 61), and links his interest in the temple with his consciousness of a filial relationship to God, so that ultimately the story serves to throw light on the character of Jesus as the Son of God. Hence a clear contrast is drawn between Jesus’ earthly parents and his heavenly Father. The story concludes with a general note of his further growth until it was time for his adult ministry.

A story which tells of the unusual ability of a boy destined for a great future, or of the early insight of a future religious teacher, inevitably finds parallels in various cultures, even down to the detail of the boy being twelve years old. Bultmann, 327f., lists: Moses (Jos. Ant. 2:230; Philo, Mos. 1:21); Josephus (Jos. Vita 2); Cyrus (Herodotus 1:114f.); Alexander (Plutarch, Alex. 5); Apollonius (Philostratus, Vita Apoll. 1:7); Si Osiris; and Buddha. There is nothing surprising

¹⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 784.

¹⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 528.

¹⁸ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 996.

^{19*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

about such parallels; even today accounts of great men will devote attention to their precociousness (or lack of it!). Hence these parallels cannot be used to show that the story in Lk. is legendary, but only that the motif is a common one. Dibelius, 103–106, who is particularly insistent on the ‘legendary’ form of the narrative, emphasises that the form does not necessarily determine the historicity of the story. B. van Iersel^{20*} argues that vs. 44 and 47, which contain the most ‘legendary’ elements, are secondary features in a story of paradigmatic form whose chief point is the dissociation of Jesus from his earthly parents and his attachment to his heavenly Father; whether or not these verses are secondary (*contra* Schürmann, I, 134f.), van Iersel rightly sees that the story is not basically about a precocious Jesus.

In itself the story is a natural one, and does not include any supernatural features which might lead to sceptical estimates of its historicity. It portrays a growth in religious understanding such as might be expected in Jesus in view of his later life, and this understanding is complemented by his obedience to his parents. Both setting and contents are thoroughly Jewish.

It has been argued that the story betrays no knowledge of the virgin birth, and that the failure of Mary and Joseph to understand Jesus accords ill with the earlier narratives (2:19, 33). But this difficulty was not present to the mind of Luke, who has included v. 50. The surprise is a conventional feature, and is adequately explained by the way in which Jesus left them to stay behind in the temple; the picture is one of awe and fear as they wonder what their unusual child will do next. It is perhaps surprising that the parents should have travelled so far from Jerusalem without discovering their child was missing, and details about how Jesus fended for himself in Jerusalem are missing; but these features are due to concentration on the religious point of the story.^{21*}

(41) Jesus’ parents had the pious habit of going to Jerusalem annually for the feast of the passover. οἱ ἡμεῖς αὐτοῦ is altered in 1012 it for dogmatic reasons (cf. 2:33, 43). Passover was one of the three annual festivals which Jewish men were required to keep in Jerusalem, the others being Pentecost and Tabernacles; in practice only the Passover was strictly observed. By this time women also attended the feast (Ex. 23:14–17; 34:23f.; Dt. 16:16; 1 Sa. 1:7, 21; 2:19; Jos. Vita 2; S²²B II, 141f.; J. Jeremias, TDN²³T V, 896–904).

(42) At the age of 12 a boy was prepared for his entry to the religious community which took place when he was 13 (P. Aboth 5:21; S²⁴B II, 144–147; for 12 years as a significant age in religious development, see also Jos. Ant. 5:348; Ps.-Ign. Mag. 3, 2.4; Grundmann, 95). The story

^{20*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{21*} See E. R. Smothers, ‘A Note on Luke II 49’, HTR 45, 1952, 67–69; P. Winter, ‘Lc 2, 49 and Targum Yerushalmi’, ZNW 45, 1954, 145–179 (cf. ZNW 46, 1955, 140f.); Laurentin, 141–146, 168–173; id. *Jésus au Temple*, Paris, 1966; B. M. F. van Iersel, ‘The Finding of Jesus in the Temple’, Nov.T 4, 1960, 161–173; J. K. Elliott, ‘Does Luke 2, 41–52 anticipate the Resurrection?’ Exp.T 83, 1971–72, 87–89.

²²SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

²³TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

²⁴SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

does not necessarily imply that this was Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem. The sentence is awkwardly expressed with a temporal clause, a lengthy genitive absolute phrase, and a temporal infinitive phrase before the main verb. ἀναβαινόντων means 'on the occasion of their going up' (Creed, 45).

(43) The two feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread occupied a total of seven days (Ex. 12:15; Lv. 23:8; Dt. 16:3), and pilgrims were required to stay at least two days (S²⁵B II, 147f.). Jesus' parents piously fulfilled the prescribed period. (This is implied by τελειόω, 13:32^{26*}; Acts 20:24^{27*}; cf. Jos. Ant. 3:201.) Jesus, however, stayed on even longer; ὑπομένω normally means 'to endure', here and Acts 17:14, 'to remain'. The description of him as a παῖς, 'boy', emphasises his youthfulness; Danker, 38, thinks that there is an allusion to the christological use of the word (cf. 1:54, 69; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). His parents (again altered in some MSS; 2:41 note) did not realise that he was missing.

(44) They would have been travelling in a large caravan (συνοδία^{28*}) with other pilgrims, and a boy of his age might easily have been with relatives or friends. They therefore went for a whole day's journey (Gn. 31:23; Nu. 11:31; about 20–25 miles, Jos. Vita 52; Shabbath 5:2; S²⁹B II, 149), before they began to search for him among their relatives and their friends (γνωστός, 23:49^{30*}; Jn. 18:15f.; ἐν is repeated by T³¹R; *Diglo*^{32t} on weak MS authority). No doubt the search took place when they encamped at nightfall.

(45–46) When they could not find him (αὐτόν is added by A Θ pm; T³³R; *Diglo*^{34t}, possibly influenced by v. 46), they returned to Jerusalem. Here they discovered him 'after three days', i.e. on the third day (Mk. 8:31; cf. Lk. 9:22). The first day would be that of the outward journey, the second that of the return to Jerusalem, and the third day that of the search for him. The three day period is so conventional that a prefiguring of the resurrection (R. Laurentin^{35*}, 101f.; J. K.

²⁵SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

^{26*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

^{27*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

^{28**} All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

²⁹SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

^{30*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

³¹TR *Theologische Rundschau*

³²*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

³³TR *Theologische Rundschau*

³⁴*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

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Elliott^{36*}) is unlikely. Teaching by the rabbis may have taken place within the temple precincts or a neighbouring synagogue (Yoma 7:1; S³⁷B II, 150). The hearers sat on the ground, at the feet of the teachers who were themselves seated, on the analogy of synagogue practice (cf. S³⁸B I, 997 on Mt. 26:55 and II, 763–765 on Acts 22:3). Here only does Luke use διδάσκαλος for Jewish teachers; elsewhere he uses it for John (3:12) and Jesus (cf. K. H. Rengstorf, TDN³⁹T II, 148–159). For Jewish teachers (not Jesus) Luke uses νομοδιδάσκαλος (5:17), γραμματεὺς (5:21; *et al.*) and νομικός (7:30; *et al.*). ἐν μέσῳ suggests a group of teachers; Easton, 32, thinks that Jesus went from teacher to teacher. Rabbinic teaching made considerable use of questions on the part of the pupils, out of which discussion could arise (S⁴⁰B II, 150f.). ἐπερωτάω is used almost exclusively of asking questions. (ἐρωτάω can also mean ‘to make a request’.) H. Greeven, TDN⁴¹T II, 687f., suggests that the word implies not just curiosity, but rather probing questions designed to elicit decisions; but the idea of critical encounter is not present here.

(47) Those who heard were astounded at Jesus’ understanding and answers, i.e. his intelligent answers (hendiadys; B⁴²D 442¹⁶). ἐξίστημι is usually intransitive (8:56; Acts, 6x; also transitive, ‘to astound’, 24:22;^{43*} Acts 8:9, 11). σύνεσις^{44*} is ‘understanding’ and ἀπόκρισις, ‘answer’ (20:26; Jn. 1:22; 19:9*^{45*}). For the thought see Ps. 119:99f. and the story in t. Nidda 5:15 (646) (S⁴⁶B II, 151). Jesus appears as a pupil who astonishes his teachers by the understanding of the law apparent in his questions and answers to their counter-questions; there is no thought of his precociously teaching the experts (as in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas 19:2 (NTA⁴⁷I, 398f.) and

^{36*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

³⁷SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

³⁸SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

³⁹TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁴⁰SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

⁴¹TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁴²BD F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (translated by R. W. Funk), Cambridge, 1961

^{43*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

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^{45**} All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

⁴⁶SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

⁴⁷NTA I E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (translated by R. M. Wilson, *et al.*), London, 1963, 1965

the Arabic Infancy Gospel 50–53 (*Synopsi⁴⁸s*, 18f.)).

(48) The unannounced change of subject has suggested that v. 47 may be an addition to the story (B. M. F. van Iersel^{49*}, 169f.), but it may simply be a case of loose syntax. Jesus' parents are amazed at the scene. ἐκπλήσσομαι (4:32; 9:43^{50*}; Acts 13:12^{51*}) may indicate fright or wonder, perhaps even joy in the present case (A⁵²G s.v.). Probably wonder at finding Jesus in the company of teachers in the temple is the dominant motif; for the first time the parents observe religious interest and insight on the part of Jesus, going beyond what a boy might have shown at this formal stage in his career. There is nothing here that conflicts with their earlier knowledge of his destiny. Mary's question is the natural one for a mother to ask in the circumstances. The reference to 'your father' is also perfectly in keeping (how else would she have referred to Joseph?), although again dogmatic alterations have been made by scribes. It may be significant that it is Mary and not Joseph who asks the question. The use of ὀδυρόμαι (16:24f.; Acts 20:38*^{53*}), 'to sorrow, suffer torment', may perhaps indicate the first fulfilment of Simeon's prophecy (Grundmann, 96). καὶ λυπούμενοι is added by D it sy^c; *Diglo⁵⁴t*, but the word is not Lucan and looks like an explanatory gloss. The imperfect ἐζητοῦμεν (A D C W Θ *pl*; T⁵⁵R; UB⁵⁶S; *Diglo⁵⁷t*) is less vivid than the present ζητοῦμεν (ℵ* ⁵⁸B 69; *Synopsi⁵⁹s*). Schürmann, I, 135, claims that the feelings of Mary and Joseph are stressed by Luke in order to present a contrast with Jesus' expression of filial obedience to God.

(49) Jesus' first recorded words, uttered at a significant period in his life, set the tone for what follows in the Gospel (Schürmann, I, 136). With τί ὅτι supply γέγονεν (cf. Acts 5:4, 9; Jn. 14:22). The question is a gentle reproach, followed as it is by a further question (οὐκ ἤδατε ...) to which Jesus expects the answer 'Yes'. His earthly parents should not have been anxiously

⁴⁸*Synopsis* K. Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Stuttgart, 1964 (cited as giving the text of E. Nestle-K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart, 1963²⁵)

^{49*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{50*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

^{51*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

⁵²AG W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge, 1957

^{53**} All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

⁵⁴*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

⁵⁵TR *Theologische Rundschau*

⁵⁶UBS *The Greek New Testament* (3rd edition), United Bible Societies, London, 1976)

⁵⁷*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

⁵⁸B Baptist source

⁵⁹*Synopsis* K. Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Stuttgart, 1964 (cited as giving the text of E. Nestle-K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart, 1963²⁵)

seeking him, for they should have known where to find him. But the words of Jesus are difficult. His parents were bound to look for him when he was lost (for how would he have found his way back home?), and it was hardly right for a boy to leave his parents in this way without telling them what he was going to do. But these points are not taken up. Jesus' reply, though gentle in manner, suggests the establishment of a break between himself and his parents, although this will be modified in v. 51. There is thus a tension between the necessity felt by Jesus to enter into closer relationship with his Father and the obedience which he continued to render to his parents. The concept of necessity is frequent in Lk. (18x; Acts, 22x; Mt., 8x; Mk., 6x; W. Grundmann, TDN⁶⁰T II, 21–25; Marshall, 106–111); it expresses a sense of divine compulsion, often seen in obedience to a scriptural command or prophecy, or the conformity of events to God's will. Here the necessity lies in the inherent relationship of Jesus to God which demanded obedience. ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου can be taken in two ways: 1. 'in my Father's house' (R⁶¹V and most translations; Klostermann, 47; Creed, 46; Black, 3; O. Michel, TDN⁶²T V, 122; A⁶³G s.v. ὁ, II.7; cf. B⁶⁴D 162⁸). See Est. 7:9; Job 18:19. 2. 'about my Father's business' (R⁶⁵V mg; J⁶⁶B; Leaney, 102f.). See 1 Cor. 7:33. The problem is discussed exhaustively by R. Laurentin^{67*}, 38–72. The first translation is perfectly possible linguistically and was accepted by the early church fathers (Lagrange, 95; E. R. Smothers^{68*}); it is also required by the context, since the point at issue is *where* Jesus is to be found. The temple is thus the 'house of God' (Jn. 2:16), and it is here that Jesus feels that he ought to be (cf. Heb. 3:6). This is why he absents himself from his earthly father's house, a contrast emphasised by the juxtaposition of vs. 48 and 49. The same point emerges later in the accounts of Jesus' relation to his parents (Mk. 3:31–35; Lk. 11:27f.; Jn. 2:4; cf. 7:3–10) and of the attitude he required from his disciples (9:59–62; 14:26; Mk. 10:29; Schürmann, I, 136).

The effect of the saying is to show that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, thus confirming 1:32, 35 (R. Laurentin^{69*}, 92). A personal relationship to God is expressed, a relationship such as

⁶⁰TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁶¹RV *Revised Version*

⁶²TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁶³AG W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Cambridge, 1957

⁶⁴BD F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (translated by R. W. Funk), Cambridge, 1961

⁶⁵RV *Revised Version*

⁶⁶JB *Jerusalem Bible*

^{67*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{68*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{69*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

might exist to some extent between an individual Israelite and God. P. Winter^{70*} has drawn attention to Frg. Tg. to Ex. 15:2 where infants claim that God is their father, with the implication that Jesus' words do not go beyond those of a pious Israelite. But the date of the phrase cited is uncertain (R. Laurentin^{71*}, 72–76) and the whole context suggests that a deeper significance is present. It is not simply the 'official' position of the Messiah, but a personal consciousness of God which finds expression both in worship and learning in the temple, and also in private communion with God. See Jeremias, *ābba*; van Iersel; G. Schrenk, TDN⁷²T V, 982–996; E. Schweizer, TDN⁷³T VIII, 366–378, 380–382; I. H. Marshall, 'The Divine Sonship of Jesus', *Interpretation* 21, 1967, 87–103.

(50) Two comments throw further light on v. 49. The first is that Mary and Joseph were unable to understand what Jesus had said (ἐλάλησεν is equivalent to a pluperfect, B⁷⁴D 347²). They are perplexed at the revelation of what divine Sonship implies, and for the moment they cannot take it in. There is a secret regarding Jesus' relation to the Father which not even they can fully understand (Lagrange, 97). Schürmann, I, 137, regards the verse as a way of saying to the reader, 'There is more in this than meets the eye'. See further R. Laurentin^{75*} for the history of the interpretation of the problem of Mary's apparent ignorance.

(51) The second comment is that this event was a temporary unveiling of Jesus' relationship with his Father; it remained a 'secret epiphany', a momentary glimpse through a curtain into a private room. The episode is followed by Jesus' return to normal obedience to his parents on their return home. καταβαίνω is appropriate for the return from Jerusalem (10:30f.; Acts 8:15, 26; 24:1; 25:1f.; Mk. 3:22; cf. ἀναβαίνω, 2:4, 42; 18:10 note). Jesus is obedient to his parents (ὑποτάσσομαι, 10:17, 20^{76*}), since in general obedience to the Lord includes obedience to parents (Col. 3:20). Nevertheless, the incident has shown to Mary that Jesus' obedience to his parents lies within a more fundamental relationship to God. She treasures up in her heart all that has happened (διατηρέω, Acts 15:29^{77*} is a variant for συντηρέω, 2:19; cf. Gn. 37:11; Dn. 7:28;

^{70*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{71*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

⁷²TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁷³TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁷⁴BD F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (translated by R. W. Funk), Cambridge, 1961

^{75*} The work cited is listed in the bibliography at the end of the introduction to the relevant section of the commentary.

^{76*} All the occurrences of the word in Lk. are listed (in some cases, all the occurrences in Acts are similarly noted).

^{77**} All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

after ῥήματα, ταῦτα is added by \aleph^c A C Θ *pl* lat sy^c sa bo; T^{78R}; *Diglo*^{79t}). As in 2:19 there may be an allusion to the source of the narrative (Easton, 33; Schmid, 83).

(52) The whole birth story closes with a note of Jesus' continued growth to manhood (2:40). προκόπτω, 'to progress, advance', has lost its original sense 'to make one's way forward by chopping away obstacles' (Rom. 13:12; Gal. 1:14; 2 Tim. 2:16; 3:9, 13^{*80*}). G. Stählin, TDN^{81T} VI, 703–719, especially 713f., notes how ancient biographers emphasised the harmonious development of their subjects, and concludes that Luke has done so in Jewish terms here and in 1:80; 2:40. Thus he refers to the wisdom of Jesus (2:40), possibly with reference to Sir. 51:17. (The textual status of ἐν τῇ is uncertain, the MSS showing considerable confusion; UB^{82S} brackets the phrase (read by \aleph L *pc*) which may be a Hebraism). ἡλικία can mean 'physical stature' (19:3; Eph. 4:13) or 'age' (12:25 par⁸³. Mt. 6:27; Jn. 9:21, 23; Heb. 11:11). Here the thought is of the maturity associated with increasing age (J. Schneider, TDN^{84T} II, 941–943); the link between προκόπτω/προκοπή and ἡλικία was a common Hellenistic one (G. Stählin, TDN^{85T} VI, 712). Stählin holds that Luke had spiritual maturity especially in mind (cf. Eph. 3:16; 4:13 with Lk. 1:80; 2:40). The final reference to favour (χάρις) with both God and man takes us back to the OT (1 Sa. 2:26; Pr. 3:4; Sir. 45:1; cf. P. Ab. 3:10; S^{86B} II, 152f.), although there is no direct parallel in the LXX. The intended picture is one of perfect development, the continuation of what has already been described in 2:40. When Jesus next appears, it will be as One ready to be consecrated to his task.⁸⁷

⁷⁸TR *Theologische Rundschau*

⁷⁹*Diglot* Luke: A Greek-English Diglot for the Use of Translators (British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1962; this work incorporates the projected 3rd edition of the BFBS text of the Greek New Testament prepared by G. D. Kilpatrick)

^{80**} All the occurrences of the word in the NT are cited.

⁸¹TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁸²UBS *The Greek New Testament* (3rd edition), United Bible Societies, London, 1976)

⁸³par. is parallel to

⁸⁴TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁸⁵TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Grand Rapids, 1964–76

⁸⁶SB H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München, 1956³

⁸⁷ I. Howard Marshall, [The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 125–130.

Analysis

This pericope is framed by two summary passages (v. 40^{88*} and v. 52^{89*}), both of which draw attention to wisdom and to grace. The author considers the episode an example; vv. 47^{90*} and 49^{91*} emphasize Jesus' cleverness on the one hand, and his attachment to his Father on the other.

At 2:40^{92*} the neatly balanced parallelism between John and Jesus has reached its conclusion; thus several exegetes consider the scene of the child Jesus in the temple to be a later accretion. The character of the language in 2:41–52^{93*} is undoubtedly Lukan. Is one to believe

^{88*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{89*} ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

^{90*} ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:47 (NRSV)

^{91*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{92*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{93*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

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

that Luke himself expanded his own text on second thought, or in a second edition?⁹⁴¹ Two considerations controvert this. First, the parallelism is nowhere perfectly balanced, because of the diversity of the traditions and the christological concerns of their redaction; the Messiah always receives the greater attention. Verses 41–51^{95*}, of course, disturb the symmetry, but not the author’s intention. Second, every significant transition contains a summary passage. The twelve years about which Luke tells nothing require such a passage (v. 40^{96*}), just as the succeeding stage does (v. 52^{97*}). That such summary passages in Luke resemble each other is natural. But each has its uniqueness: the first stresses growth during Jesus’ childhood; the

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

⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:41–52 (NRSV)

⁹⁴¹ Brown (*Birth*, passim, e.g., 455) believes that Luke added the hymns (1:46–55*, 68–79*; 2:29–32*) and this scene (2:41–52*) later.

^{95*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search 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 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:41–51 (NRSV)

^{96*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{97*} ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

second, Jesus' progress into adulthood. The passage at 2:41–52^{98*} is therefore an original component of Jesus' birth narrative.

1. *Structure*. According to Henk J. de Jonge, this pericope is a paradigm of concentric symmetry.⁹⁹² The journey abroad (A; vv. 41–42^{100*}) corresponds to the journey home (A'; v. 51a^{101*}), Jesus' unnoticed tarrying (B; v. 43^{102*}) to his uncomprehending reaction (B'; vv. 49–50^{103*}), and the search and discovery by the anxious parents (C; vv. 44–46a^{104*}) to their

^{98*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search 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 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

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

⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:41–52 (NRSV)

⁹⁹² Henk J. de Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Lk 2, 41–51a," *NTS* 24 (1977–78) 339.

^{100*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

Luke 2:41–42 (NRSV)

^{101*} ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{102*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

^{103*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

Luke 2:49–50 (NRSV)

^{104*} ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

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

Luke 2:44–46 (NRSV)

reproach of Jesus (C'; v. 48^{105*}). The center of the pericope would then be Jesus' position among the scholars (X; vv. 46b–47^{106*}). According to de Jonge, the word μέσῳ (“in the midst”) stands precisely in the middle, the eighty-fifth word of the 170 that compose the unit.¹⁰⁷³

This structural analysis does not do justice, however, to the movement of the narrative. Its dramatic tension arises through the contrary programs of parents and child: the will of the parents corresponds to the Law, the will of Jesus to the new revelation. The everyday character of the events is strongly emphasized at the beginning (κατ' ἔτος, “every year,” v. 41^{108*}; κατὰ τὸ ἔθος, “according to the custom,” v. 42^{109*}). Joseph and Mary are behaving as usual in vv. 41–42^{110*}, like observant Jews. The unexpected appears for the first time in v. 43b^{111*}: the boy stays in Jerusalem. Luke then skillfully leaves behind this salvation-historical *novum* to return to the theme of pious fulfillment of the Law (vv. 43c–44^{112*}), which is broken off at v. 45a^{113*}. After the long search (v. 45b^{114*}), an unexpected vision meets the parents' eyes (vv. 46–47^{115*}): Jesus in the midst of the teachers. This image is surely a high point in the narrative, but only the first. For a saying follows this picture, an explanation follows the sign, and an interpretation

^{105*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{106*} 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

¹⁰⁷³ de Jonge, “Sonship” 338 n. 5.

^{108*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

Luke 2:41 (NRSV)

^{109*} ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

Luke 2:42 (NRSV)

^{110*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

Luke 2:41–42 (NRSV)

^{111*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

^{112*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:43–44 (NRSV)

^{113*} ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:45 (NRSV)

^{114*} ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:45 (NRSV)

^{115*} 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

follows the event (vv. 48–49^{116*}). After this climax, Luke brings the narrative to its conclusion (vv. 50–51^{117*}) with the parents’ final reaction (v. 50^{118*}) and Jesus’ behavior in response to it (v. 51^{119*}). The parents remain closed to their son’s program, while the son, for the time being, adapts himself to theirs.

According to de Jonge, v. 51a^{120*} forms the conclusion, while v. 51b^{121*} is linked to v. 52^{122*} and represents the final paragraph of the entire birth narrative. On the other hand, “*his* mother” alludes to the previous episode; thus Luke makes a progressive transition from the conclusion of the individual story to that of the entire birth narrative, maintaining a double interest for mother and son throughout.

2. *Tradition and Redaction*. Traditional material hides behind the final Lukan redaction.¹²³⁴ First, the neatly rounded form suggests the possibility of an independently circulating story. Second, the birth narrative shows no influence on it; compare the virgin birth with Joseph’s fatherhood here. Third, the “image” of the child’s unusual wisdom is in tension with the “words”

^{116* 48} When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:48–49 (NRSV)

^{117* 50} But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:50–51 (NRSV)

^{118* 50} But they did not understand what he said to them.

Luke 2:50 (NRSV)

^{119* 51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{120* 51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{121* 51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{122* 52} And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

¹²³⁴ Bastiaan Martinus Franciscus Van Iersel (“The Finding of Jesus in the Temple: Some Observations on the Original Form of Luke 2, 41–51a,” *NovT* 4 [1960] 161–73, esp. 171) believes that v. 44* may also be a redactional addition, on the basis of its Lukan language and its “novelistic” style. Martin Dibelius (*Tradition*, 106) is of the opinion that, in the tradition, Jesus’ saying formed the conclusion of the episode.

of the father-son relationship. Fourth, despite the acclamation in v. 47^{124*}, the author failed to correct v. 48^{125*}, so that the audience in v. 47^{126*} is actually still the subject.¹²⁷⁵

Luke has changed little of the gist of the narrative, but has rendered it in his own words.¹²⁸⁶ With the supplementary v. 47^{129*}, he gives the “image” (v. 46^{130*}) equal weight with the “words,” and with the interpretation that he has embedded in the two summary passages (the theme of Jesus’ wisdom). In the tradition the climax came at the end: Jesus’ devastating retort (v. 49^{131*}). Without any alteration of the formulation, Luke sees the father-son relationship in this from a higher christological perspective than the tradition. Luke and his readers would inevitably recall the conception by the Holy Spirit (1:35^{132*}).

3. *Genre*. Is this not a biographical legend,¹³³⁷ whereby the stress is on the ending in v. 49^{134*}? If a legend, our pericope then would stand at the later end of the Jesus traditions; but as an apothegm, it would represent “the most reliable information about Jesus.”¹³⁵⁸ The *Sitz im Leben* would then be catechetical instruction.¹³⁶⁹

But the biographical nature of the tradition and its interest in Jesus’ identity and life should not be overlooked. Moreover, the oldest apothegms are characterized not by the ontological christology we find here, but by a soteriological christology. In form, content, and tone, this account approximates the other episodes in the birth narrative. From a form-critical perspective,

^{124*} ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:47 (NRSV)

^{125*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{126*} ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:47 (NRSV)

¹²⁷⁵ The vocabulary of v. 47a* is Lukan, as Acts 9:21* shows. See de Jonge, “Sonship” 344. The same cannot be claimed for v. 47b*. Van Iersel does remark, however, that Luke 20:26*—a statement of Luke’s—is similar to v. 47* (“Finding,” 170).

¹²⁸⁶ Van Iersel, “Finding,” 166–67.

^{129*} ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:47 (NRSV)

^{130*} ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46 (NRSV)

^{131*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{132*} ³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Luke 1:35 (NRSV)

¹³³⁷ Dibelius, *Tradition*, 106–9.

^{134*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

¹³⁵⁸ So van Iersel, “Finding” 172–73.

¹³⁶⁹ René Laurentin shares this opinion (*Jésus au temple: Mystère de Pâques et foi de Marie en Luc 2, 48–50* [EtB; Paris: Gabalda, 1966] 84, 143, 158–59).

this should be counted among the anecdotes, like those beloved by ancient biographers, especially when they contained a bon mot. Such a biographical interest advocates a late date and a Jewish Christian milieu. The function of the anecdote is apologetic: to defuse the criticism of Jesus' humble human origin through his relationship to the heavenly Father.

The apocryphal infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Thomas (2d century) closes with this episode and emphasizes Jesus' miraculous wisdom, thus underscoring Luke's redactional tendency.¹¹³⁷⁰ There, and even earlier in the *Epistula apostolorum*, one reads an anecdote that is form-critically and substantively comparable to ours. Jesus' parents have entrusted him to a teacher. When he expects Jesus to repeat the letter alpha, the child already knows beta and demands an explanation of this second letter from his teacher.¹¹³⁸¹

4. *Results of the Analysis.* Luke adopts and reworks an independent anecdote, and with it concludes the entire birth narrative. Inserted between two summary passages, it demonstrates Jesus' wisdom (vv. 46–47^{139*}), although Jesus' saying (v. 49^{140*}), which told something of the child's divine identity, originally formed the climax. The *Sitz im Leben* for this tradition was an inner-Jewish discussion, more specifically, an apologetic response of the Christians to Jewish aspersions about Jesus' miserable origins. It remains uncertain whether the conclusion of the narrative (v. 50^{141*} onward) is traditional or redactional, and where Luke begins the final summary passage (in v. 51b^{142*?}).

Commentary

The Pilgrimage (vv. 41–45^{143*})

¹³⁷¹⁰ A perceptive comparison of both texts is in Günther Schmahl, "Lk 2, 41–52 und die Kindheitserzählung des Thomas 19, 1–5: Ein Vergleich," *BibLeb* 15 (1974) 249–58.

¹³⁸¹¹ This summarizes the oldest form of the scene, that of *Epistula apostolorum* 4 (15). The episode, further developed, appears twice in the Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Thomas (6, 14). Cf. the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew 31.1–2; 38.1; the Arabic Infancy Gospel 48–49; the Armenian Infancy Gospel 20.1–7.

^{139* 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

^{140* 49} He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{141* 50} But they did not understand what he said to them.

Luke 2:50 (NRSV)

^{142* 51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{143* 41} Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Only Luke tells anything about Jesus' youth. Is this scene the most important of the birth narrative, a sneak preview of the resurrection?¹¹⁴⁴² Or is it the beginning of the apocryphal accretions, the first sign of decline? Allusions of the resurrection are lacking; but the episode is important as the conclusion of the birth narrative, and as a transition between the Messiah's birth and his public appearance. Especially significant is the father-son relationship, which fits into a sequence with the annunciation to Mary (1:35^{145*}) and Jesus' baptism (3:32^{146*}). As always in Luke, theology is embedded in narrativity: v. 49^{147*} can serve as a theological description of Jesus' entire life, even if the sentence primarily portrays the matter-of-fact answer of a child to his mother.

■ **41–42^{148*}** The account is neither pro- nor anti-Jewish.¹¹⁴⁹³ Jesus' parents¹¹⁵⁰⁴ are pious people, which is comprehensible and respectable to both Jews and pagans. The view that the child became a “son of the Law” (בֶּר מִצְוָה) at the festival at twelve years of age cannot yet be attested in this era.¹¹⁵¹⁵ Unlike a girl,¹¹⁵²⁶ a twelve-year-old boy is not completely grown, but is indeed at least a παῖς. Whoever places Jesus here at the stage of adulthood misses precisely the point: even as a child, Jesus possesses the wisdom of the great ones. Only later must he take the entire yoke of the Law upon himself, although, following the Mishnah, he participated in the pilgrimage to

¹⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

¹⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:41–45 (NRSV)

¹⁴⁴¹² Laurentin, *Jésus au temple*, 8.

^{145* 35} The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Luke 1:35 (NRSV)

^{146* 32} son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz, son of Sala, son of Nahshon,

Luke 3:32 (NRSV)

^{147* 49} He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

148* ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

Luke 2:41–42 (NRSV)

¹⁴⁹¹³ Whenever possible, Luke refrains from using foreign words. In 2:41*, in which the word πάσχα (“Passover”) is unavoidable, he clarifies it through the word “festival”; in 2:42* he omits it.

¹⁵⁰¹⁴ A few copyists replace this expression with “Joseph and Mary” in consideration of the virgin birth. See above, commentary on 2:33.

¹⁵¹¹⁵ Most of the Talmudic texts cited by F. Manns set the majority of a boy at age thirteen (“Luc 2, 41–50 témoin de la Bar Mitswa de Jésus,” *Mar* 40 [1978] 344–49). Manns does indeed mention a few passages in which the age is set at twelve (*b. Ber.* 24a; *Sifre Num* 22 [the ms. tradition here vacillates between twelve and thirteen years]). Further, he maintains that the Bar Mitzvah festival appears only in more recent texts.

¹⁵²¹⁶ See the commentary on 8:42 below.

Jerusalem from the time he could go.¹⁵³⁷ For text-critical considerations, “Jerusalem” in v. 42^{154*} should probably be stricken, since it occurs in both vv. 41^{155*} and 43^{156*}.

In both Greek and Jewish biography, there is the topos of the gifted hero, who at twelve years demonstrates his superior intelligence: Cyrus, Cambyses, Alexander, and Epicurus—or Solomon, Samuel, and Daniel.¹⁵⁷⁸ According to Josephus¹⁵⁸, Samuel began to prophesy as a twelve-year-old.¹⁵⁹⁹ Thus Luke intends to describe Jesus’ superiority by having him follow in the footsteps of the great heroes.

■ **43^{160*}** In v. 43a^{161*} Luke speaks as a writer, not as an expert on Jewish liturgy. It does not interest him whether the full seven days of the festival have been completed, or only the first two, which were prescribed for the pilgrims.²¹⁶²⁰

Ἀναβαινόντων (“[they] went up”)²¹⁶³¹ and τελειωσάντων (“[the days] had been fulfilled”) are not in the same tense. The first participle, in the present, attests duration; the second, in the aorist, summarizes a completed action, and begins the episode (see the translation above).²¹⁶⁴² Moreover, from the beginning Luke neatly keeps parents and child separate: until v. 43b^{165*}, only Mary and Joseph are active. Of course, Jesus has traveled with them, but he attracts attention as an individual only through his desire to stay in Jerusalem. His staying behind is placed in opposition to the “returning”²¹⁶⁶³ of the others through the compound verb ὑπομένω (“to stay behind”). Καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ (“but his parents did not know”) cannot refer to an earlier statement by Jesus (not transmitted by Luke), which would have announced to his parents

¹⁵³¹⁷ *m. Hag.* 1.1. See de Jonge, “Sonship” 317–24.

^{154*} ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

Luke 2:42 (NRSV)

^{155*} ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

Luke 2:41 (NRSV)

^{156*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

¹⁵⁷¹⁸ de Jonge, “Sonship”, 322–23.

¹⁵⁸ Josephus Flavius Josephus

¹⁵⁹¹⁹ Josephus *Ant.* 5.10.4 § 348.

^{160*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

^{161*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

¹⁶²²⁰ See Plummer, 75; and Godet, 1.146. About the festival, cf. Exod 12:15*, 16*; Lev 23:6–8*; Deut 16:3*.

¹⁶³²¹ Since Jerusalem lies on a height, one says “go up to Jerusalem.”

¹⁶⁴²² Édouard Delebecque, “Note sur Lc 2, 41–52,” *BAGB* (1973) 75–83, reprinted in idem, *Études*, 39–51, esp. 45.

^{165*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

¹⁶⁶²³ Cf. BAGD s.v.

that he must remain in Jerusalem.²¹⁶⁷⁴ Neither γνώσκω (“to know”) nor its absolute usage is surprising.²¹⁶⁸⁵

■ **44–45**^{169*} In v. 44^{170*} the elegant syntax and choice of words are worth noting. When do the parents begin to seek the child?²¹⁷¹⁶ As soon as they noticed that he was not with them, or only just in the evening, in the context of stopping for the night? The dramatization of the narrative supports the second possibility. A search first becomes necessary, when, at the end of the day’s journey, anxious worries arise in their hearts.²¹⁷²⁷ “Among their relatives and friends” is reminiscent of similar Lukan expressions.²¹⁷³⁸ Verse 45^{174*} stands in antithetical parallelism to v. 43^{175*}: when the parents “were returning,” Jesus stayed in Jerusalem; when they did not find the child, they returned to Jerusalem. With the present participle (ἀναζητοῦντες, “to search for”),²¹⁷⁶⁹ Luke suggests that the parents inquired of every group they met.

The Image of the Wise Son (vv. 46–47^{177*})

¹⁶⁷²⁴ Delebecque, “Note” 41–47.

¹⁶⁸²⁵ Cf. Luke 9:11*; 24:18*; Acts 17:13*.

^{169*} ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:44–45 (NRSV)

^{170*} ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:44 (NRSV)

¹⁷¹²⁶ In an effort to shield Mary and Joseph from the criticism that they did not pay close enough attention to Jesus, various authors have assumed that the men and women traveled to Jerusalem in separate groups. Lagrange (94) objects to this old hypothesis.

¹⁷²²⁷ The syntax does not prevent the possibility that the search began while they were still on the road. Plummer (75) imagines that, during the whole day, they scoured the long train of pilgrims from the front to the rear, and from the rear to the front.

¹⁷³²⁸ 1:58*; 14:12*; 21:16*; Acts 10:24*.

^{174*} ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:45 (NRSV)

^{175*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

¹⁷⁶²⁹ One should not pass over the ἀνά of ἀναζητέω: “seek out.”

^{177*} 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

■ **46–47**^{178*} Καὶ ἐγένετο (“and it happened that”) designates a new paragraph. After the seeking comes the finding (v. 46^{179*} contrasts with v. 45^{180*}). Μετὰ ἡμέρας τρεῖς (“after three days”) does not allude to the resurrection³¹⁸¹⁰ (which is dated with τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ or τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ in Luke, “on the third day”),³¹⁸²¹ but expresses an indefinite period, and should thus not be figured more exactly.³¹⁸³²

The surprise is that the parents do not find their child just anywhere. For the second time, Jesus’ “program” upsets his parents’ expectations: he has installed himself in the temple. Because of this, the discussion that follows is full of misunderstandings. The parents ask about his remaining behind, while their son answers by asserting his place in the temple.

In the temple precincts (ιερόν, not ναός), Jesus tarries “in the midst of the teachers”; this second specification makes the first more precise (as in 4:39^{184*}). A synagogue in the Jerusalem temple is nowhere attested, but has nevertheless repeatedly been an object of conjecture since the seventeenth century. Since the place for instruction was the stoa (the portico, a covered hall of columns), Luke probably has in mind the portico of Solomon,³¹⁸⁵³ whose wisdom was, of course, well known to him (11:31^{186*}); this is where he later localizes the apostles’ place of instruction as well. Just as the gospel, through Paul, can encounter Greek philosophy only in Athens (Acts 17), Jesus’ first discussion with the teachers of Israel should not take place in the village synagogue of Nazareth, but in the world-famous temple of the holy city, to which a religious occasion

^{178*} 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

^{179*} ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46 (NRSV)

^{180*} ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:45 (NRSV)

¹⁸¹³⁰ Against Laurentin, *Jésus au temple* 101–2; and J. K. Elliot, “Does Luke 2:41–52* Anticipate the Resurrection?” *ExpTim* 83 (1971–72) 87–89.

¹⁸²³¹ 9:22*; 18:33*; 24:7*, 46*; Acts 10:40*.

¹⁸³³² Agreeing with de Jonge (“Sonship,” 324–27), against the commentators who follow Grotius in counting one day for the return to Galilee, one day for the renewed trip to Jerusalem, and the day on which they find Jesus.

^{184*} ³⁹ Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

Luke 4:39 (NRSV)

¹⁸⁵³³ Acts 3:11*; 5:12*, 21*, 25*.

^{186*} ³¹ The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!

Luke 11:31 (NRSV)

(Passover) brings him (cf. 2:1–5^{187*}, 22^{188*}).³¹⁸⁹⁴ The image is not of a classroom with a teacher, but of a learned assembly of wise men.³¹⁹⁰⁵ Regardless of whether Jewish rabbis ever met in such a manner, Luke employs the image of all the seated scholars, among whom Jesus is accepted with equal rank. He is not sitting like a disciple at the feet of these teachers (cf. Acts 22:3^{191*}). His position is rather that of a teacher. The teachers' acceptance of him in this manner testifies to Jesus' wisdom, though this wisdom expresses itself in listening³¹⁹²⁶ and questioning.

Verse 47^{193*} allows the conjecture of an audience. This redactional verse also extends the wisdom of the child, who even knows how to answer difficult questions, which in this location are, of course, of a religious nature. Without rabbinic instruction, the child Jesus knows God's will. Behind this, and behind the apology of the "uneducated" apostles (Acts 4:13^{194*}), there is a conflict with Jewish intellectuals, who derided the deficient education of Jesus, and also within the primitive community. "His understanding and his answers" is a hendiadys,³¹⁹⁵⁷ insofar as the understanding demonstrates itself in the answers. But with σύνεσις ("understanding") Luke intends to describe not only the answers but the person of Jesus.

Σύνεσις ("understanding") is the intellectual capacity to see connections and make judgments; it can be translated with "understanding," "judgment," "discernment," or "insight." In the LXX and especially in wisdom literature, the word frequently means the insight nourished by religious faith, often nearly synonymous with σοφία ("wisdom"). In biblical tradition, people possess this quality not in their worldly autonomy but in their union with God's will. But Hellenistic Judaism still presents itself more as a world of teaching and wisdom than as a world of revelation and prophecy, and this influences the later wisdom books in the LXX. Despite this,

^{187*} ¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

³ All went to their own towns to be registered.

⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.

⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

Luke 2:1–5 (NRSV)

^{188*} ²² 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

Luke 2:22 (NRSV)

¹⁸⁹³⁴ de Jonge, "Sonship", 330.

¹⁹⁰³⁵ Luke designates the rabbis with διδασκάλων ("of the teachers") only here, and this is a hint that Luke has taken the passage from tradition.

^{191*} ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today.

Acts 22:3 (NRSV)

¹⁹²³⁶ In this case ἀκούω ("to listen") with the genitive of the person to whom one listens is the usual idiom. Cf. the discussion about ἀκούω with the genitive or the accusative in the accounts of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:7*; 22:9*).

^{193*} ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:47 (NRSV)

^{194*} ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.

Acts 4:13 (NRSV)

¹⁹⁵³⁷ BDF §442.16.

σύνεσις remains a religious and inspired power of insight, which is also true for Luke. Later in the Gospel, Jesus will appear as Messiah and miracle-worker. Here he is, even as a child, the model of pious wisdom.³¹⁹⁶⁸

If one can speak of isotopy (semantic framework), the isotopy of knowledge controls this pericope. As often in Luke, the theme is not the antinomy of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, but the choice between a good thing and a still higher value. At issue is the tension between Jewish wisdom, not yet enlightened, and the higher, Christian, revealed wisdom. Jesus' parents believe they know the Mosaic Law (v. 44^{197*}), but exactly this is the issue (v. 49^{198*}). It is still an open question whether they want to subscribe to the new thing manifested by Jesus (v. 51b^{199*}) or not (v. 50^{200*}). Depending on their decision, their partial knowledge can be either introductory or delusory. The stress, however, is not on this, but on Jesus' wisdom, which is first (vv. 46–47^{201*}) that of the teachers, that is, knowledge of the Scriptures and past revelation, and then (in the saying, v. 49^{202*}), the wisdom of a prophet, that is, knowledge of the eschatological and christological revelation.

One ancient interpretation of this passage goes in this direction. According to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.*²⁰³ 1.20.2), heretics claimed that here Jesus had wanted to introduce his rather un insightful parents to the unknown God. Origen, on the contrary, emphasized the parents' search for the son, and invited his audience to search the Scriptures and the Word with equal energy.³²⁰⁴⁹ In addition,

¹⁹⁶³⁸ See Hans Conzelmann, "σύνεσις, κτλ.," *TDNT* 7 (1971) 888–96; and Horst Balz, "σύνεσις, κτλ.," *EDNT* 3 (1993) 305.

^{197* 44} Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:44 (NRSV)

^{198* 49} He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{199* 51} Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:51 (NRSV)

^{200* 50} But they did not understand what he said to them.

Luke 2:50 (NRSV)

^{201* 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.

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

^{202* 49} He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

²⁰³ *Adv. haer. Adversus haereses*

²⁰⁴³⁹ *Hom. in Luc.* 18.2–3; 19.4–5. See E. Peretto, "La lettura origeniana di Lc 2, 41–42," *Mar* 37 (1975) 336–57. Laurentin (*Jésus au temple*, 190) cites a further fragment, attributed to Origen (*Werke* 9 [GCS 49; Berlin: Akademie, 1959] 116.17–117.4).

many of the church fathers remarked on the wordplay and emphasized that Jesus wishes to lead us to the true father.⁴²⁰⁵⁰

The Cryptic Explanation (vv. 48–49^{206*})

■ **48^{207*}** Verse 48^{208*} depicts the shock⁴²⁰⁹¹ to the parents, quite understandable from a human point of view, and their pain. The mother, not the father, speaks, because of the Marianic perspective of the Lukan birth narrative, and because it is the author's literary purpose to make the opposition of the two fathers graphic in the dialogue.

The text indeed moves in the direction of a higher christology, but a serious acknowledgment of the incarnation forms its underpinnings. Is not Luke 1–2 also a recognition of Jesus' humanity, which is not only evident in the passion and Gethsemane? The twelve-year-old is also portrayed in his process of growing (cf. 2:40^{210*}), and in his developing autonomy, which begins to assert itself (v. 43^{211*}). He does not do what his parents expect; he does what they do not wish. This makes them suffer, and women, above all, can identify with Mary's question: "Child, why have you treated *us* (ἡμῖν) like this?" Like an adolescent, Jesus does not give in. He asserts his opinion with absolute matter-of-factness. As often in generational conflicts, the parents do not understand their children at the close of the argument, and, as often in such cases, the father remains silent. In the memory of the Lukan community, Jesus appeared not only as the son of the divine Father, but also in complete humanity, as a maturing boy.

²⁰⁵⁴⁰ See, e.g., the fragment of Titus of Bostra's commentary on Luke (Joseph Sickenberger, ed., *Titus von Bostra: Studien zu dessen Lukashomilien* [TU 21.1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901] 152; cited by Laurentin, *Jésus au temple*, 190).

^{206*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

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

Luke 2:48–49 (NRSV)

^{207*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{208*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

²⁰⁹⁴¹ Jesus' parents (2:48*) do not share the wonderment of the crowd. They are indignant that Jesus has left them, and are not at all impressed by their son's wisdom. The logic of the story prevents one from taking their side.

^{210*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{211*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

On the level of theological message, the narrative elements of this verse (v. 48^{212*}) express the violent defense mechanisms of the half-initiated in the face of new perspectives from a new revelation. The residents of Nazareth react no differently, only more violently (4:16–30^{213*}). The members of the congregation in Caesarea also react no differently when Paul sets himself to follow a higher standard (Acts 21:10–14^{214*}). Knowledge of God is by no means only cognitive; strong feelings and impulses of emotion are pulled into the fray. Until the end of Acts, Luke will

^{212*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{213*} ¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,

¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”

²³ He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’ ”

²⁴ And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.

²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land;

²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon.

²⁷ There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage.

²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.

³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Luke 4:16–30 (NRSV)

^{214*} ¹⁰ While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

¹¹ He came to us and took Paul’s belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’ ”

¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.

¹³ Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

¹⁴ Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, “The Lord’s will be done.”

Acts 21:10–14 (NRSV)

bring Jewish legal observance, which for him is incomplete knowledge, into the correct light of the final revelation (Acts 28:23–28^{215*}).⁴²¹⁶²

In the New Testament, τέκνον (“child,” v. 48^{217*}) occurs much more frequently than παῖς (“boy,” v. 43^{218*}) in the vocative (only 8:54^{219*} contains an address that is grammatically in the nominative); the vocative ὦ παῖ became obsolete, and τέκνον still retains something of its etymological meaning (τίκτω, “give birth to”; cf. Gal 4:19^{220*}). Τί ἐποίησας ἡμῖν οὕτως (“why have you treated us like this?”) is a Hebrew Bible formulation.⁴²²¹³ It belongs “always in the context of a deception, out of which it is spoken; thus it is an expression of ‘disillusionment’ or ‘disappointment.’” In this sense, the idiom also suits perfectly the situation presupposed in Luke 2:48^{222*}.⁴²²³⁴ The postpositioned οὕτως (“like this”), which refers back to v. 43^{224*} and not to Jesus’ last action (vv. 46–47^{225*}), appears instead of the proleptic τοῦτο (“this”), which shows

^{215*} ²³ After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

²⁴ Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe.

²⁵ So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,

²⁶ ‘Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

²⁷ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn— and I would heal them.’

²⁸ Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

Acts 28:23–28 (NRSV)

²¹⁶⁴² See the investigation of the various schemes in Jean Zumstein, “L’apôtre comme martyr dans les Actes de Luc: Essai de lecture globale,” *RThPh* 112 (1980) 371–90.

^{217*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{218*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

^{219*} ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and called out, “Child, get up!”

Luke 8:54 (NRSV)

^{220*} ¹⁹ My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,

Galatians 4:19 (NRSV)

²²¹⁴³ Gen 12:8*; 20:9*; 26:10*; 29:25*; Exod 14:11*; Num 23:11*; Judg 15:11*.

^{222*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

²²³⁴⁴ Rudolf Pesch, “ ‘Kind, warum hast du so an uns getan?’ (Lk 2, 48),” *BZ* n.s. 12 (1968) 245–48.

^{224*} ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

Luke 2:43 (NRSV)

^{225*} ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

that Luke is consciously using this old formulation. Usually, “I” takes the first place in a coordinated formula (“I and Barnabas,” 1 Cor 9:6^{226*}).⁴²²⁷⁵ Mary says here, “Your father and I.” According to Augustine, Mary is following the *ordo conjugal* (in Eph 5:23^{228*}, the man is the head of the woman);⁴²²⁹⁶ but Luke is rather trying to make the wordplay about the two fathers clearer (vv. 48^{230*}, 49^{231*}).

■ **49^{232*}** Τί ὄτι (“how [is it] that,” “why,” v. 49^{233*}) is infrequent (cf. Acts 5:4^{234*}, 9^{235*})⁴²³⁶⁷ and requires completion with an unexpressed verb (ἐστίν or γέγονεν, “is” or “has been”; cf. John

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

Luke 2:46–47 (NRSV)

^{226*} ⁶ Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

1 Corinthians 9:6 (NRSV)

²²⁷⁴⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 15:11*; John 8:16*; 10:30*.

^{228*} ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.

Ephesians 5:23 (NRSV)

²²⁹⁴⁶ Augustine *Sermo* 11.18 (*PL* 38.343). See Laurentin (*Jésus au temple*, 217–18) and de Jonge (“Sonship,” 330–31).

^{230*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{231*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

232* ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{233*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

^{234*} ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!”

Acts 5:4 (NRSV)

^{235*} ⁹ Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

Acts 5:9 (NRSV)

²³⁶⁴⁷ BDF §299.4; and Delebecque, “Note” 40–42.

14:22^{237*}). Luke uses ἀναζητέω (“to look for,” “to search”) in vv. 44^{238*} and 45^{239*}, ⁴²⁴⁰⁸ because the parents are searching for their son on the way back (ἀνά); by contrast, in vv. 48–49^{241*}, where they find themselves in Jerusalem, he writes the simple ζητέω. Οὐκ in a question (v. 49^{242*}) anticipates a positive answer. According to the evangelist, the parents did not need to look for Jesus, for they should have known where he was staying. Ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου δεῖ εἶναί με is an old *crux interpretum*, since various meanings are possible: (1) Since the scene takes place in the temple, one could assume a local meaning: to be “in my Father’s domain,” “at my Father’s place”;⁴²⁴³⁹ (2) since τὰ with the genitive generally means “what belongs to one,” and εἶναι ἐν means “to concern oneself with” in good Greek, one could translate, “to concern myself with my Father’s business”;⁵²⁴⁴⁰ (3) since Luke values double meanings, the local antithesis (with his heavenly, not his earthly, father) leads to the statement about Jesus’ concern with that which is proper to his heavenly Father. Such an enigmatic response well suits the genre of the anecdote. The present tense of δεῖ (“must”) alludes to a style of behavior that will last beyond this scene in the temple, which Jesus will soon conclude. His parents should have known of this enduring relationship with God. With this ambiguous answer,⁵²⁴⁵¹ Jesus gives his activity symbolic significance. His unexpected stay in the temple is a parable of the Messiah’s constant activity, just as the unpretentious gesture of purification of the temple (19:45–46^{246*}) also receives symbolic value.

^{237*} ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?”

John 14:22 (NRSV)

^{238*} ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:44 (NRSV)

^{239*} ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

Luke 2:45 (NRSV)

²⁴⁰⁴⁸ In both occurrences the mss. alternate between the imperfect, which Nestle-Aland chooses, and the present.

^{241*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:48–49 (NRSV)

^{242*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

²⁴³⁴⁹ See Laurentin, *Jésus au temple* 68–72; idem, *Truth*, 212–13. He decides on the meaning “at my Father’s place.” Cf. the LXX: Job 18:19*; Esth 7:9*.

²⁴⁴⁵⁰ See Delebecque, “Note” 40–42.

²⁴⁵⁵¹ See de Jonge, “Sonship” 331–37.

^{246*} ⁴⁵ Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there;

⁴⁶ and he said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.”

Luke 19:45–46 (NRSV)

In formal terms, the mother's double reaction (v. 48^{247*}) is answered by her son with a double saying (v. 49^{248*}). The construction shows both chiasmic and parallel elements.⁵²⁴⁹²

In terms of content, the δεῖ (“must”),⁵²⁵⁰³ so loved by Luke, describes the relationship between father and son as a salvation-historical one. Jesus' devotion to his Father corresponds to the Father's will for the Son. Their mutual relationship manifests itself in the economy of salvation, which should be considered neither purely functional nor abstractly ontological, but rather a personal *agape* relationship.

It is questionable that “my Father” possessed this broad christological connotation in the traditions, but it is improbable that every Jewish child could speak in this manner, since the addressing of God as “Abba” is part of the specific identity of the historical Jesus. But indeed, the midrashic literature demonstrates the oracular quality that Jews, pagans, and Christians liked to attribute to children's utterances.⁵²⁵¹⁴ Of particular interest is the addition to Exod 15:2^{252*} in the Fragment Targum: “From the breasts of [their] mothers, sucklings made signs with their fingers to their fathers and said to them: He is our father who gave us honey to suck out of the rock, and gave us oil from the flinty rock.”⁵²⁵³⁵

The possibility of a historical memory cannot be dismissed; it is more important, however, to perceive the forces that gave rise to the transmission of such a story. First, there are the christological concerns of a community that presumed as much wisdom of its Lord as of other Jewish and pagan heroes. This competition explains the alien literary elements and thematic motifs.⁵²⁵⁴⁶ The biblical accounts of Samuel (1 Sam [LXX 1 Kgdms] 2:18–26^{255*}) and of Daniel

^{247*} ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

Luke 2:48 (NRSV)

^{248*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

²⁴⁹⁵² The subjects of the verbs are placed chiasmically (son-parents in 2:48b*, parents-son in 2:49*); the two occurrences of τί that introduce the question are parallel, as are the mentions of the “father.”

²⁵⁰⁵³ See de Jonge, “Sonship” 350–51; Jacques Dupont, “Jésus retrouvé au temple,” *AsSeign* 11 (1970) 40–51, esp. 46–47.

²⁵¹⁵⁴ One need think only of the *tolle, lege* of a child's voice, which Augustine interpreted as a command from heaven when he converted. See Augustine *Confessions* 8.12.

^{252*} ² The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

Exodus 15:2 (NRSV)

²⁵³⁵⁵ Translation from Paul Winter, “Luc 2:49* and Targum Yerushalmi,” *ZNW* 45 (1954) 145–79, esp. 170–71.

²⁵⁴⁵⁶ Bultmann, *History*, 300–301; de Jonge, “Sonship” 339–42; Laurentin, *Jésus au temple*, 147–58.

^{255*} ¹⁸ Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod.

¹⁹ His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

²⁰ Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord”; and then they would return to their home.

have left their mark.⁵²⁵⁶⁷ The second force at work is the memory of Jesus' human side. In v. 46^{257*} the child possesses no supernatural knowledge; he remains quite human throughout the course of the account. Jesus at twelve thus fits well with the christology of earliest Christianity: he is the Son of God, and a human being.

The Return to Normal Affairs (vv. 50–52^{258*})

■ 50–51^{259*} The door to the christological mystery⁵²⁶⁰⁸ has briefly cracked open. Now Luke closes it and leaves off from the *novum*, in order to bring the family—including Jesus—back into the sphere of observant Judaism. Jesus' parents do not understand the ῥῆμα (“saying,” refers probably to v. 49^{261*}) and return to Nazareth. Jesus, true to

²¹ And the Lord took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord.

²² Now Eli was very old. He heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

²³ He said to them, “Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all these people.

²⁴ No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear the people of the Lord spreading abroad.

²⁵ If one person sins against another, someone can intercede for the sinner with the Lord; but if someone sins against the Lord, who can make intercession?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to kill them.

²⁶ Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.
1 Samuel 2:18–26 (NRSV)

²⁵⁶⁵⁷ According to various ancient witnesses, Daniel was twelve years old when he sat down with the elders and began to rule (according, e.g., to Harclensis, one of the Syrian translations in Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible [London: 1657] 4: *Historia Susannae, oratio Azariae cum cantico trium puerorum et historia Beli et draconis*, 8): cf. Sus 45* = Dan 13:45* (Th, Vulgate). See Dupont, “Jésus retrouvé” 45; and de Jonge, “Sonship” 323 n. 1. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 5.10.4 §348), Samuel was twelve when he began to prophesy (1 Sam [LXX 1 Kgdms] 2:26*). Finally, many LXX mss. mention that Solomon was twelve when he ascended to the throne (1 Kgs [3 Kgdms] 2:12*).

^{257*} ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:46 (NRSV)

^{258*} ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:50–52 (NRSV)

^{259*} ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:50–51 (NRSV)

²⁶⁰⁵⁸ See Laurentin, *Jésus au temple*, 84.

^{261*} ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”

Luke 2:49 (NRSV)

the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12^{262*}), remains obedient to them (the periphrastic form and the present participle emphasize duration).

Then Luke broadens his scope in the form of a summary statement. Mary retains the same attitude as twelve years before. The sentence recalls 2:19^{263*}, ⁵²⁶⁴⁹ contextualized, but still a biblical formula.⁶²⁶⁵⁰

■ **52^{266*}** The same is true of Jesus. Verse 52^{267*} seems like a refrain that the readers have already heard in 2:40^{268*}, and it adapts 1 Sam (LXX 1 Kgdms) 2:26^{269*}. But here the concern is less about the stage of growth (2:40^{270*}) than about the stage of progress (προκόπτω, “to make progress”). But between σοφία (“wisdom”) and χάρις (“favor,” both in 2:40^{271*}), ἡλικία (“stage in life,” “bodily size”)⁶²⁷²¹ is inserted. Χάρις is a term of relationship (“in divine and human favor”) and should not be understood in a reified manner. God’s favor and human recognition rest on the child as he develops.

Conclusion

Like a painter, Luke illustrates the miraculous wisdom of Jesus. Well versed in the Law, he is probably the wisest child in Israel—this was retold with pride. But in the striking response of the boy, the pericope contains a second pole: Jesus’ will corresponds to God’s new revelation and renders obsolete the lawful will of his earthly parents. This will

^{262*} ¹² Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Exodus 20:12 (NRSV)

^{263*} ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19 (NRSV)

²⁶⁴⁵⁹ Πάντα τὰ ῥήματα (“all these words,” text uncertain) goes beyond the episode at the temple and embraces the events in Luke 1 and 2. Διατηρέω (“to treasure”) emphasizes keeping the memory, whereas in 2:19* συντηρέω stressed the retention of Mary’s words, and συμβάλλω (“to ponder”), her interpreting them. The connotation of interpreting cannot be resumed here because, according to 2:50*, neither Mary nor Joseph has comprehended Jesus’ statement.

²⁶⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Gen 37:11* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* adds, “in his heart”); Dan 4:28* (LXX); 7:28* (Th); *T. Levi* 6:2.

266* ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

^{267*} ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

Luke 2:52 (NRSV)

^{268*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{269*} ²⁶ Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.

1 Samuel 2:26 (NRSV)

^{270*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

^{271*} ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

²⁷²⁶¹ See Dupont, “Jésus retrouvé” 43.

has its legitimacy in the claim, now made explicit, of a son's relationship to his true father.²⁷³

2:41–50. By the time Jesus **was 12 years old**, He understood His mission on earth. As was their custom, Mary and Joseph went yearly **to Jerusalem** to observe **the Feast of the Passover**. The one-day Passover was followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 23:15; Lev. 23:4–8; Deut. 16:1–8). The entire eight-day festival was sometimes called the Passover (Luke 22:1, 7; John 19:14; Acts 12:3–4). On the return home from their trip to Jerusalem, **His parents** did not realize He was not with them until they had gone some distance. **After three days they found Him in the temple courts**. The “three days” refer to the time since they had left the city. They had traveled one day's journey away from the city (Luke 2:44); it took them a second day to get back; they found Him on the following day. When Jesus was found, He was interacting with the **teachers** of the Law, **listening** and **asking** intelligent **questions**. **Everyone ... was amazed** (*existanto*, “beside themselves in amazement”; cf. 8:56) **at His understanding and His answers**. When Mary and Joseph **saw Him, they were astonished** (*exeplogēsan*, “struck out of their senses,” perhaps with joy; cf. 4:32; 9:43). In response to Mary's question about why He had **treated** them in this manner, Jesus drew a sharp distinction between them and God, His true Father (2:49). His statement confirmed that He knew His mission and that His

²⁷³ François Bovon and Helmut Koester, [Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50](#), Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 108–115.

parents also should have known about His mission. However, His parents **did not understand** this.

g. Jesus' continued growth (2:51–52).

2:51–52. Luke was careful to point out that Jesus **was obedient to** Joseph and Mary in case his readers would think otherwise from the previous paragraph. Mary **treasured all these things in her heart**, reflecting on and remembering her 12-year-old's words, even though she did not understand them. Perhaps Luke received these details about the early years of Jesus from Mary herself or from someone in whom she had confided. Jesus continued to grow (*proekopten*, lit., “cut one's way forward,” i.e., “increased”) in every way (spiritually, mentally, and physically) and had **favor with God and men** (cf. v. 40).²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ John A. Martin, [“Luke,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 210.