



## The Gospel of Luke - Chapter 2

### **II. Luke 1:5-2:52 - The Infancy Narrative (continues/concludes)**

#### Summary of Chapter Two

When Emperor Augustus Octavian declared that a census was to be taken, each man was to return to the town of his tribe in order to be registered.

It came time for Mary to give birth to Jesus. His birth was in a manger in the Judæan town of Bethlehem, as there was allegedly no room at the Inn. There were shepherds on the hillside keeping watch over their flocks, when an angel appeared to them and told them of the great event. Suddenly, there was a heavenly host, all singing and praising God. The shepherds hurried off to see what the angel had foretold.

Jesus was circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day as required by God's law. After 6 weeks, Mary's time of purification was ended and it was time to present Jesus, as her first born, at the temple in Jerusalem to fulfil the laws of dedication. Simeon, a true servant of the Lord, was instructed, by the Holy Spirit, to be at the temple that he might see the individual who would save Israel. He came and broke into praise, expressing the thought that he could now die as he had seen his saviour. Mary and Joseph were surprised by what Simeon had said. He warned Mary that her child would be chosen by many and rejected by more. Mary would feel great joy and pain because of her son Jesus.

Anna was a long time widow of the tribe of Asher and served at the temple. Not much is known of Anna but she appeared to possess the gift of prophecy and served the people by praying for them; giving them what comfort she could. She praised God for the birth of Jesus and knew that he would set Israel free.

Jesus and his family then returned to Nazareth, where Jesus grew in knowledge becoming wise and he was clearly blessed by God.

When Jesus was 12, the family again travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, which was probably an annual event for them. On the way home, Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was missing and they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. They found him in the temple, listening to the teachers of the law and asking questions of them.

His parents expressed their displeasure with him but he simply told them he was about his Father's business, something they failed to grasp.

Jesus then returned home with them and became fully submissive to them in honour of the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment. Jesus continued to grow in strength and wisdom. God was pleased with him.

## II.e Luke 2:1-52 - The birth of Jesus Christ

This section includes three parts: Jesus' birth (vv.1-20), his presentation at the temple (vv.21-40), and his presence as a boy in the temple (vv.41-52).

### II.e.i Luke 2:1-20 - Jesus Is born

Whereas the birth of John is described in two verses: <<*When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy*>> (Luke 1:57-58), the birth of Jesus, who is the greater one, covers 20 verses.

<sup>1</sup> In those days Cæsar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

### Luke 2:1

The fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem rather than in Nazareth was due to a decree, i.e. an imperial edict from Cæsar Augustus, who reigned from 31BC to AD14.

In those days is an imprecise date, as we will see in Luke 3:1-2, suggesting that Luke did not know the exact year. This is confirmed in Luke 3:23, where it states: <<*Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph*>>.

Entire Roman world means the entire known inhabited world that was subject to the civilisation and governance of Rome.

Census. People were to be registered for the purpose of taxation.

<sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

### Luke 2:2

The first census that took place while Quirinius was governor. According to Josephus, Quirinius was governor of Syria between AD6-7 and conducted a census in AD6, which Luke was aware of and mentions in Acts 5:37. But this cannot be the census Luke is referencing here, since it occurred *after* the death of Herod the Great in 4BC and it is known that Jesus was born *during* Herod's reign. This is confirmed by: <<*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judæa, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem*>> (Matthew 2:1), and in Luke 1:5a we read: <<*In the time of Herod king of Judæa*>>.

Various plausible solutions have been proposed. Some interpreters believe that, because governor was a very general term for ruler, it may be that Quirinius was the *administrator* of the census but not the governor proper.

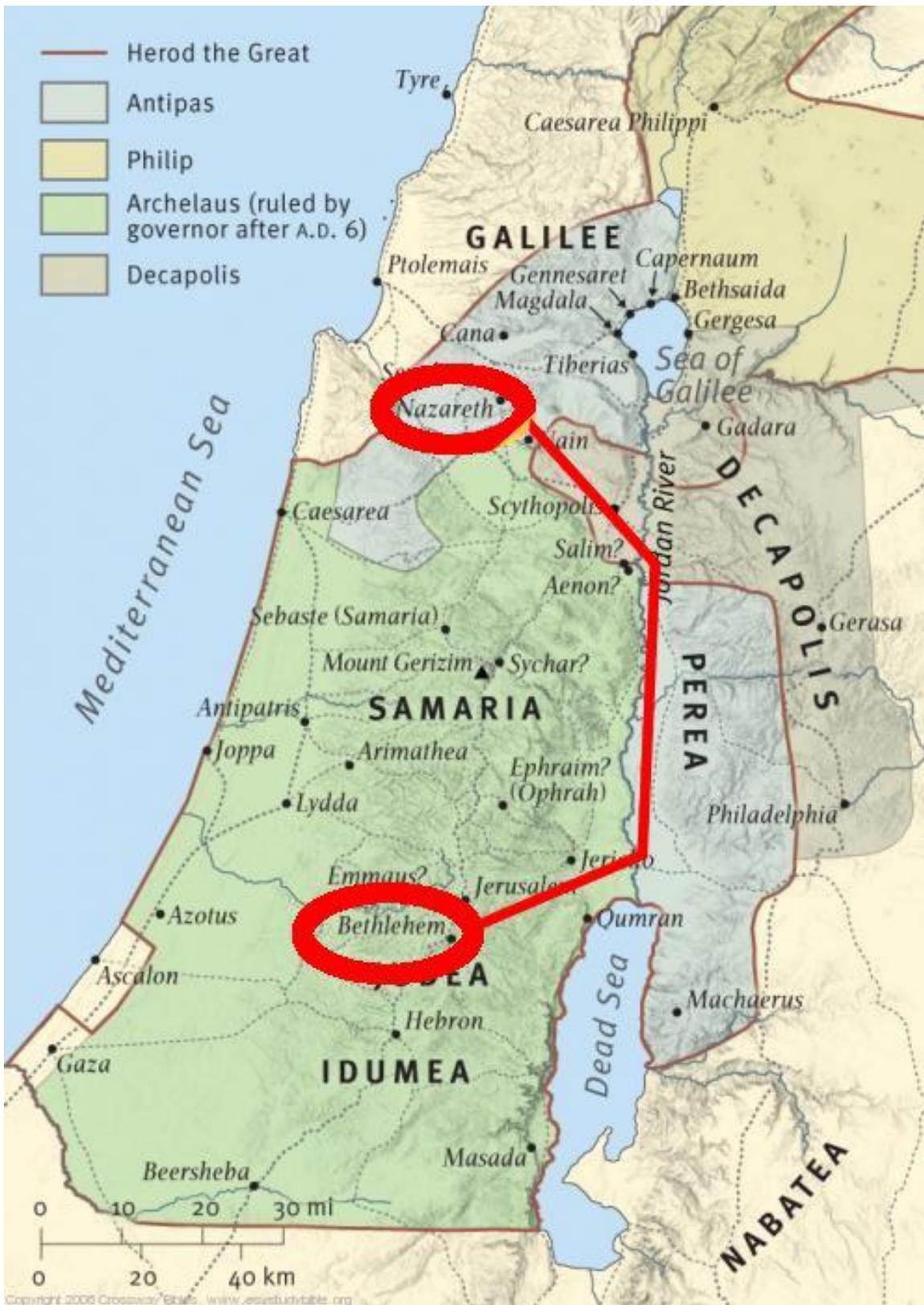
Another solution is to translate the verse: 'This was the registration *before* Quirinius was governor of Syria', which is grammatically possible taking the Greek word *prōtos* as before rather than first. The Greek construction is apparently somewhat unusual on any reading.

This would make sense because Luke would then be clarifying that this was before the well known troublesome census of AD6 recorded in Acts 5:37.

One additional proposal is that Quirinius was governor for two separate terms although this lacks confirming historical evidence.

Although the year cannot be determined with complete certainty, there are several reasonable possibilities, which correspond well to Luke's carefully researched investigation as stated in Luke 1:3-4, and to the historical and geographical accuracy evidenced throughout Luke and Acts. The most reasonable date is autumn in the year of 6BC or early spring 5 BC.

<sup>3</sup> And everyone went to his own town to register. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judæa, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.



The suggested route as Jews often avoided Samaria on grounds of righteousness

### Luke 2:3-4

**Register.** The key point of this exercise was not the collecting of the tax per se but the registration, as this would form part of showing allegiance to Rome. Subsequent taxation exercises would not require such a mass migration of people around the country.

Although Joseph was at this time living in Nazareth, his ancestral home, i.e. own town, was Bethlehem. They went up to Judæa since Bethlehem in Judæa lies on a mountain 2,654 feet or 809m high. The references to David explain why Jesus was born in Bethlehem, for it was long prophesied: <<*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times*>> (Micah 5:2). It is also interesting to note that Bethlehem means House of Bread. It is appropriate that the Bread of Life should hail from there (John Chapter 6).

The traditional site for Jesus' birth is a cave, grotto or stable in Bethlehem and was made in a pagan shrine to Adonis in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD under Hadrian. The Constantinian basilicastyle Church of the Nativity replaced this shrine in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, with an octagonal room providing views of the grotto. The 4<sup>th</sup> Century church however, was destroyed and rebuilt as the present-day structure in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century.



<sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

### Luke 2:5

**Pledged** or  **betrothed**. In those days it was seen as being legally married although the marriage was not yet consummated.

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

## Luke 2:6

**The time came.** As with Luke 1:57, which states: <<*When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son*>>. On the surface, political reasons determine where Jesus is born but the ultimate cause is the God who controls history and who guarantees that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem in accordance with OT prophecy, i.e. Micah 5:2, and is also recorded in Matthew 2:1-6.

At last, this was the time prophesied in Daniel 2:44 <<*In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever*>>. Jesus was not what the Jews expected but he was what humanity so desperately needed.

Jesus was born at a time when Judæa had just become a province of the Roman Empire and tributary to it. This is evident by the fact that the Jews were being taxed just like the rest of the empire.

Jerusalem was taken by the Roman general Pompey about sixty years before the birth of Jesus, who then granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus II but not the government of the state. Hyrcanus was part of the Hasmonian dynasty and of the priesthood. The power of the state was more and more reduced until it was quite subdued and was ruled by Cyrenius, the Roman Governor of Syria. He was quite often referred to as Silpitius Quirinus.

It was at this time that Messiah was to be born, in order to fulfil the prophecy of a dying Jacob: <<*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*>> (Genesis 49:10 KJV). This was the first time that Judæa was taxed, a symbol of their servitude to Rome; therefore, Shiloh must come to set up his kingdom.

According to the early Christian advocates, Justin Martyr and Tertullian, Roman records at the time of the census would have included the births of children, thus Jesus was technically registered as a citizen of Rome. Perhaps Isaiah was referring in part to this when he wrote: <<*This is what the LORD says – the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel – to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you*>> (Isaiah 49:7), for he was indeed ‘the servant of rulers’ by registration.

<sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

### Luke 2:7

And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. The greatest miracle in the history of the world, the eternal Son of God being born as a man, happens quietly in a stable, in an obscure village in Judæa. Luke's description is restrained giving only a very few details.

Swaddling cloths. In ancient times strips of cloth were used to wrap babies to keep them warm and secure.

A manger is a feeding trough for animals.

The inn, with the definite article 'the', indicates that this was a specific, publicly known lodging place for individual travellers and caravans. An inn is for travellers, and Jesus was just a sojourner in this world, at least for his first coming. Like the inn, Jesus welcomes all comers but does not require any payment from them. His grace and mercy are an eternal free gift.

No room for them. The inn was full since many had come to Bethlehem to register for the census.

**It may seem strange to us today that, even during a period of congestion in a small town, that in a gathering of mainly relatives, including close family, no room could be found for Mary. After all, she was only about 13 years old and expecting her first child. But it is likely that the stigma of being pregnant out of consummated wedlock was the overriding factor in her not being properly accommodated.**

### II.e.i.1 Luke 2:8-20 - The Shepherds and the Angels

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

### Luke 2:8-9

It is not surprising to us now that the news was not taken to the leaders and affluent members of society, as might have been expected, but was taken first to those of low esteem. How typical is it of God to recognise those in our society that we often

dismiss. Many of the great leaders and prophets were at one time themselves **shepherds**, including the Patriarchs, Moses and David. Now we have the greatest shepherd of them all, come to gather his sheep and bring them into the eternal fold of his Kingdom.

**The glory of the Lord** is known as the *Shechinah*, which is the bright light that surrounds the presence of God himself, sometimes appearing as a cloud, sometimes as a bright light or burning fire. See Exodus 16:10, 24:17 and 40:34, Ezekiel 1:28 and Revelation 21:23 for examples of this.

**<sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.**

#### **Luke 2:10**

**Do not be afraid.** As in Luke 1:13, the angel wants to reassure the shepherds they have nothing to fear.

**I bring you good news** is the Greek word *euangelizomai* the verbal form of Gospel.

**Great joy** for, as in Luke 1:14, there is cause for real celebration, and it is intended for **all the people**, Jew and Gentile alike.

**11 Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.**

#### **Luke 2:11**

**A Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.** These three titles reveal the greatness of Mary's son. Saviour is confirmed in Luke 1:69 <<*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*>>, or: <<*God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel*>> (Acts 5:31), and: <<*From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised*>> (Acts 13:23).

Christ is from the Greek word *Christos*, used for the Hebrew word *Messiah*. It is a title rather than a name as confirmed in: <<*Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ*>> (Acts 5:42), and: <<*As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said*>> (Acts 17:2-3).

The astonishing announcement, probably not fully grasped by the shepherds, is that this Messiah, who has been born as a baby, is also the Lord God himself.

<sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

#### Luke 2:12-13

A great company of the heavenly host means thousands of angels: <<And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, Let all God's angels worship him>> (Hebrews 1:6).

<sup>14</sup> Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.

#### Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest was the proclamation of the angels with the news about Jesus. The eternal, omnipotent Son of God has taken on: <<the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness>> (Philippians 2:7b), for: <<when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons>> (Galatians 4:4-5). And John records one of the greatest doxologies: <<Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!>> (Revelation 5:11-12).

Peace is the peace of salvation that God gives through his Son.

The expression peace, the Hebrew word shalom, has a much richer connotation than the English word does, since it conveys, not merely the absence of conflict and turmoil, but also the notion of positive blessing, especially in terms of a right relationship with God, and, as a result, the idea that 'all is well' in one's life. This may be manifested most clearly amid persecution and tribulation.

Jesus is the 'Prince of Peace' prophesied in Isaiah 9:6.

On whom his favour rests or among those with whom he is pleased. God's gift of peace will come, not to all humanity, but to those whom God is pleased to call to himself. Peace now exists between humanity and God. It also provides a platform for

peace between Jew and Gentile, and between all mankind - if only we would all share in his love and grace!

**<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.**

#### Luke 2:15

**Although shepherds were scorned by neighbouring cultures, many of the great leaders of the Hebrews chose to be shepherds as the peace and solitude it offered them also gave them time to be alone with God.**

The Lord has told us about or made known. The Lord himself, not the angelic intermediary as in v.9, is the ultimate source of the revelation.

**<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.**

#### Luke 2:16-20

Having seen the infant Jesus, the shepherds began glorifying and praising God, just as the angels had done in vv.13-14.

#### II.e.ii Luke 2:21-40 - Jesus presented in the temple

This account of the presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple, underscores the piety of Jesus' family, their faithfulness to God and their keeping of his law. It confirms parallels with the presentation of the infant John the Baptist in Luke 1:59-80.

**<sup>21</sup> On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.**

## Luke 2:21

As a reminder, circumcision on the eighth day is commanded in Genesis 17:11-14, which states: <<*You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner – those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant*>>. You may wish to review other comments made on Luke 1:59.

By undergoing circumcision, Jesus shed his blood at the beginning of his life for us just as he would at the end of it. Although he knew no sin, God chose to demonstrate how he would deal with it: <<*For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man*>> (Romans 8:3).

Although it was written about Abraham, it could equally apply to Jesus: <<*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them*>> (Romans 4:11).

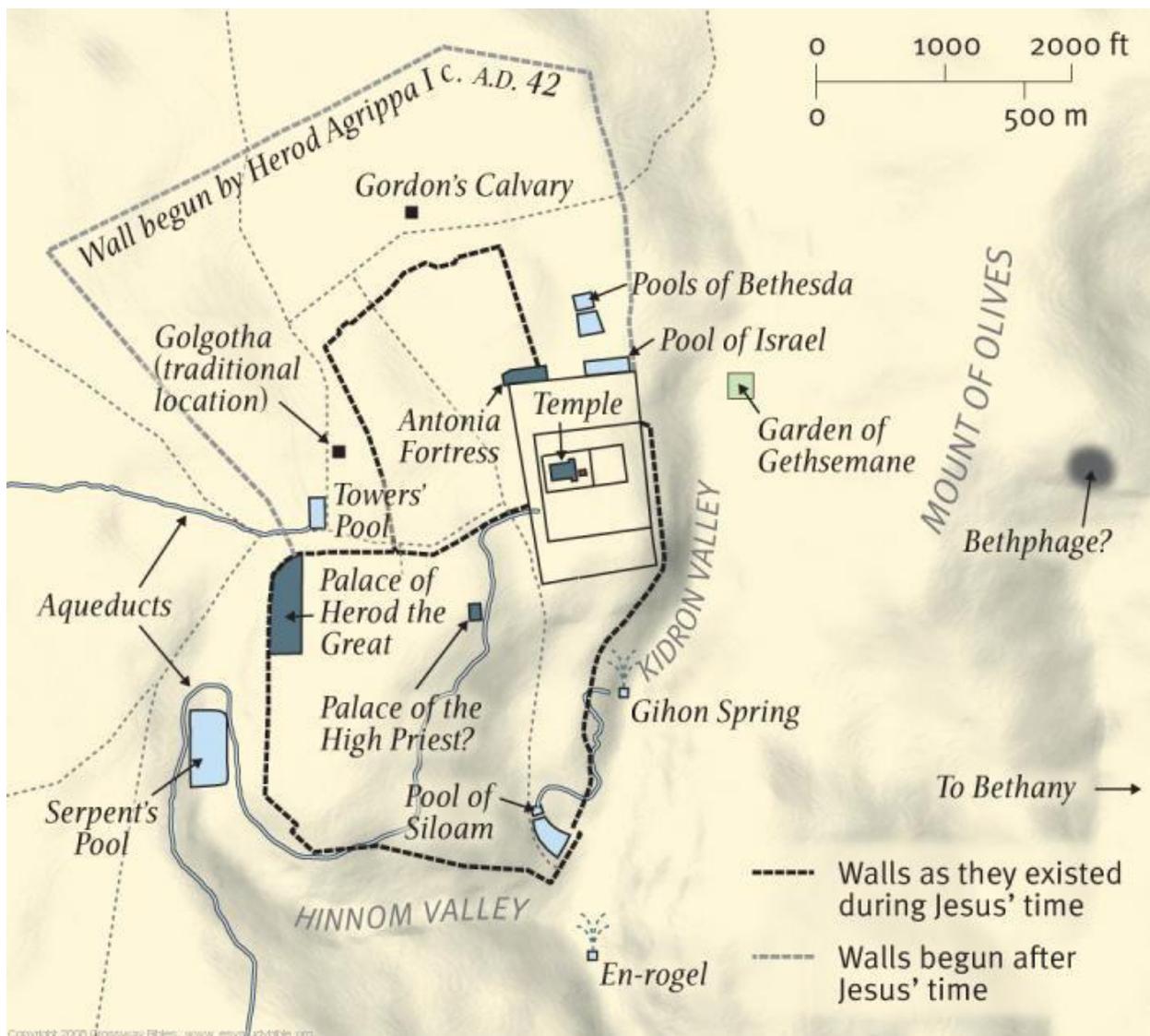
He was named Jesus. As with John's circumcision the emphasis falls on the name. The name Jesus is the Greek word *Iēsous*, which is the equivalent of *Yeshua* / *Yehoshua*, i.e. Joshua in Hebrew and means Yahweh is Salvation or the Lord saves. It is sometimes written as *Ihesus*.

The letters IHS are often seen on display in high churches and on gravestones. The IHS Christian emblem is a monogram, which represents the Holy Name of Jesus consisting of the three letters: IHS. During the Middle Ages, the name of Jesus was often written IHESUS. Apparently, it is also an acronym of the Latin *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, which translates as 'Jesus, Saviour of mankind.'

<sup>22</sup> When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

## Luke 2:22

The time of their purification. Forty days after Jesus' birth is the 8 days to the circumcision plus the 33 days of Leviticus 12:3-4, which are counted inclusively: <<**On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over**>>. The woman is unclean for double this time if she gives birth to a girl! Note that it is *their* purification, as a child is normally acknowledged as being conceived in sin, i.e. into a fallen world. Even though this was not the case with Jesus, it was still necessary to: <<**fulfil all righteousness**>> as with his baptism (Matthew 3:15b).



A plan of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus

<sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: a pair of doves or two young pigeons.

#### Luke 2:23-24

A pair of doves or two young pigeons indicates that Joseph and Mary were poor or of modest means, as confirmed in Leviticus 12:8. They were, at least, not among the more well-to-do who could afford to offer a lamb: <<*If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean*>>.

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

#### Luke 2:25-26

Nothing else is known historically concerning Simeon. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Consolation, the Greek word *paraklēsis*, can also mean comfort and is the hope that God would come to rescue and comfort his people. Others also eagerly awaited with a similar expectation, as confirmed in v.38 and in these words: <<*Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judæan town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God*>> (Luke 23:50-51). Similarly, in Mark 15:43 <<*Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body*>>.

Luke's expression ties in with the wording of messianic prophecies in Isaiah:

- <<*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God*>> (Isaiah 40:1).
- <<*For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones*>> (Isaiah 49:13b).
- <<*The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins*>> (Isaiah 51:3a).
- <<*I will guide him and restore comfort to him*>> (Isaiah 57:18b).
- <<*to comfort all who mourn*>> (Isaiah 61:2b).

This hope involves salvation, as we will see in v.30; the 'forgiveness of ... sins', as in Luke 1:77; and the saving of the lost in Luke 19:10.

The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, indicating the powerful anointing and manifest presence of the Holy Spirit.

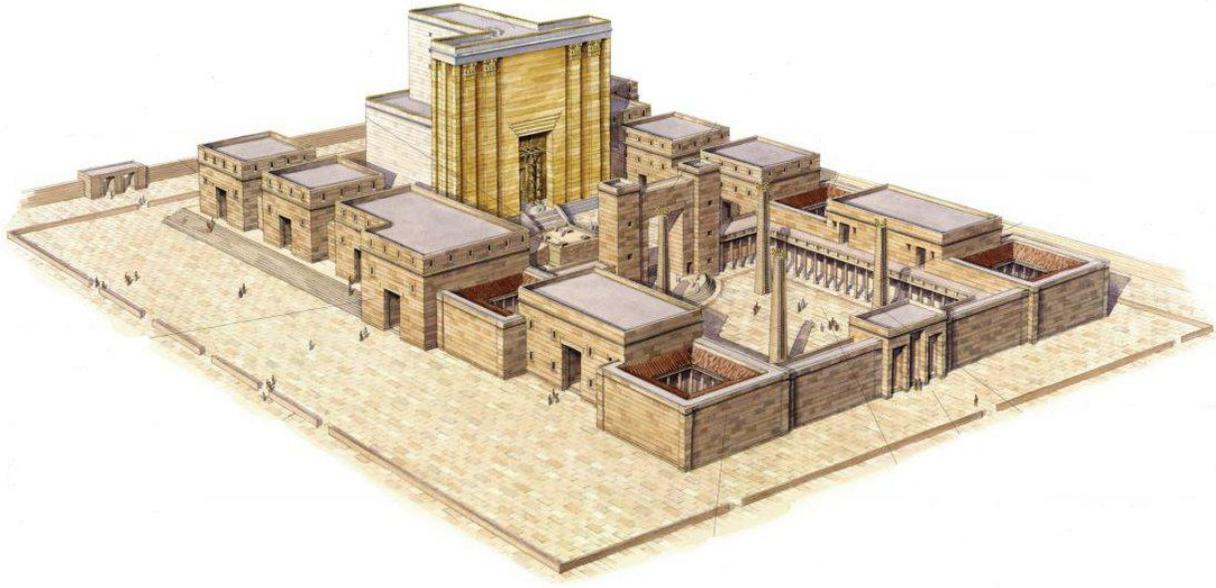
One tradition has it that Simeon was the son of the famous Jewish leader Hillel. He was apparently given the title Rabban, an honour bestowed only of seven men and was a senior figure in the Sanhedrin. If this is true, then he would not necessarily have been that old as Hillel lived until AD10, where as Simeon gives the impression he is now ready to die having seen the Lord's Salvation for Israel (v.30). There is no record of him in the Mishnah but since he had a reputation for proclaiming the Kingdom of the Messiah, any references to him could easily have been omitted, as it would have been against the common teaching of the Sanhedrin. Of course, his willingness to die could be in the same vein of that stated by Paul: <<For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain>> (Philippians 1:21).

<sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

#### Luke 2:27

By the Spirit or under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. As it is written: <<He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet'>> (Matthew 22:43), <<At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure>> (Luke 10:21), <<And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints>> (Ephesians 6:18), <<On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet>> (Revelation 1:10), and: <<At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it>> (Revelation 4:2).

He went into the temple courts. The scene of the encounter is the temple complex not the temple sanctuary.



### The Temple Courts

<sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: <sup>29</sup> Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. <sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all people, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

#### Luke 2:28-32

All people indicates both Israel and the Gentiles as confirmed in v.10.

A light (v.32) is parallel to your salvation in vv.30-31, and confirmed in Isaiah 49:6 <<*I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth*>>.

Whereas, this salvation gives light for revelation to the Gentiles, as confirmed in Acts 26:17-18 <<*I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*>>, it brings glory for Israel, who already possessed God's revelation and are the people through whom the Saviour came.

Jesus did not come to be a candle for the Jews in the Menorah but he came as: <<*the light of the world*>> (John 8:12 & 9:5), and: <<*the sun of righteousness*>> (Malachi 4:2b). The image is a Menorah that would hold seven candles in the Tabernacle or Temple.



For spiritual Israel: <<*The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory*>> (Isaiah 60:10).

<sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.

#### [Luke 2:34-35](#)

Falling refers to the judgment of the haughty and arrogant, as was confirmed in Luke 1:50-53 <<*His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty*>>, and in Luke 6:24-26 <<*But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets*>>.

Rising refers to the salvation of the humble and meek. Jesus says: <<*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour*>> (Luke 4:18-19), and again: <<*Looking at his disciples, he said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man*>> (Luke 6:20-23).

Jesus is set for the rising again of many in Israel, that is, for the conversion of many back to God that were dead and buried in sin; for the consolation of many in God, that have sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those who are set for the fall may well be the same as those who will rise again. For Christ will heal our wounds if we humble ourselves before him and confess that we are reliant upon him. Paul fell in the service of the Law only to rise to the heights of grace and mercy in Christ his God.

For others though, it is a different story, for they have chosen to reject him as their Lord. Whether this is due to their prejudice or corruption, or simply their desire to be god of their own lives, is irrelevant, for their sin and ruin will be aggravated by this revelation of Jesus as the Christ; *<<many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead>> (Jeremiah 46:11), and split their souls on the Rock of Salvation, to whom this precious Foundation will be a cause for stumbling: <<and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured>> (Isaiah 8:14-15). This is confirmed by: <<Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and, A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for>> (1 Peter 2:7-8).*

It is a sad fact that so many will not heed the message and choose so readily to dismiss the only path to eternal salvation; but it is not for us to become disheartened. We must persevere, live a life that reflects the love of Christ in us and share the Gospel message with all who will listen, irrespective of their response to it. For some, it is the savour of life unto life; for others the savour of death unto death. God will deal with the outcome.

A sign that will be spoken against foretells future opposition to Jesus.

Sword refers to Mary's future sorrow at Jesus' crucifixion: *<<Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene>> (John 19:25).*

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was

eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying.

#### Luke 2:36-37

But worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. God reveals his secret purposes in history to humble servants who continually live in his presence, as confirmed in Amos 3:7 <<*Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets*>>.

Although little is given about Anna, she was clearly a remarkable woman. She would probably have married as a young teenager and was widowed but 7 years later. Remaining faithful to her deceased husband and to God, she served in the temple, probably teaching the young women the ways of God through the scriptures that they would otherwise find difficult to understand. In an age of apostasy, and given the cultural context for women, Anna was indeed remarkable.

<sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup> When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

#### Luke 2:38-39

Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord and thus demonstrated that they were part of the pious remnant in Israel like Zechariah and Elizabeth, as confirmed in Luke 1:6 <<*Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly*>>.

Their own town of Nazareth was where they currently lived.

What Luke omits from his Gospel is that the journey went via Bethlehem, where Jesus was visited by the Wise Men; and then Egypt, where Joseph took him to escape Herod's attempts to kill him in the first two years of his life. See Matthew Chapter 2 for this period of Jesus' life.

<sup>40</sup> And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

## Luke 2:40

Grew and became strong; filled with wisdom; the grace of God. The fourfold description of Jesus' growth parallels the twofold description of John in Luke 1:80, but shows that Jesus is greater. Jesus experienced physical and intellectual growth as any ordinary human child would but he also experienced the favour of God in his everyday life in an unusual and increasing measure. This was confirmed at his baptism: <<*and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased*>> (Luke 3:22).

## II.e.iii Luke 2:41-52 - The boy Jesus in the temple

The stories of Jesus' birth and childhood end with one final story that takes place, where the infancy narrative began, in the temple as recorded in Luke 1:5-23.

<sup>41</sup> Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

## Luke 2:41

Every year reveals the piety of Joseph and Mary. This followed the requirements of the Law of Moses: <<*Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed*>> (Deuteronomy 16:16).

It was only a requirement for Jewish men to attend the three great feasts but, despite their poverty and growing family, Joseph took at least Mary and Jesus on this occasion. The other children that Joseph and Mary had together were younger, and the male children would not have been required to attend until they were 12 years old, but may have travelled with them anyway. We do not know if Jesus had attended other feasts, but somehow it seems likely, given his remarkable knowledge of God and passion for being in the temple.

The Passover was the opening-day feast of the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread: <<*The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast*>> (Leviticus 23:5-6). Passover is always celebrated on Nisan 14, which is called the 'Day of Preparation'. It is the day that the Paschal lamb is slaughtered and will be eaten that evening, which is Nisan 15, for the Jewish day starts at sunset. This marks the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is celebrated over seven days making it an eight day festival in total.

**<sup>42</sup> When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.**

#### Luke 2:42

Twelve years old is an important age for a Jewish boy, as he is supposed to start fasting from that age, especially on the Day of Atonement, and to prepare for full adult membership of the church at age 13 known as Bar Mitzvah.

**<sup>43</sup> After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. <sup>44</sup> Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.**

#### Luke 2:43-44

After the Feast was over indicates they stayed for the full week. Although not written in the Law, many people felt it only obligatory to attend the first two days of Passover and treat the rest as a holiday. It was a long journey from Galilee and it would seem natural to want to make the most of their time, but we must also remember they were probably still a poor family and living away from home and not earning your living, could be very costly.

They were unaware of it. They assumed that Jesus was proceeding home to Nazareth in the pilgrim caravan, perhaps with the family of a relative or neighbour. Some people see this as a case of negligence but it is more providential than anything as it teaches us, as we will see.

They travelled on for a day, which is about 20 miles or 32 km.

**<sup>45</sup> When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. <sup>46</sup> After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.**

#### Luke 2:45-47

Did not find him perhaps reminds us of Job 23:8-9 <<*But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him*>>.

After three days, as it was a day's journey from Jerusalem, a day returning to Jerusalem, and a day of searching for Jesus there. Although they found him after just three days of seeking, we must remember there are some who seek for years without finding him, and others who do not seek at all!

His parents found Jesus in the temple; listening; asking questions, and amazing those present at his understanding and his answers. Those present were amazed but perhaps David had foreseen this event when he wrote: <<*I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts*>> (Psalm 119:99-100).

Temple here is the Greek word *hieron* and denotes the area surrounding the temple including the Court of the Gentiles. This is in distinction from the temple building proper, the Greek word *naos*, from which non-Jews were excluded.

Later in his life Jesus would call his disciples but here he is shown to himself be a disciple. The word disciple means follower or learner and the Jews all followed the teaching of a Rabbi, which is what Jesus was doing here. More literally for the Jews was the fact that they became imitators of their Rabbi and that is what Christians are called to - to be imitators of Jesus.

<sup>48</sup> When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. <sup>49</sup> Why were you searching for me? he asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?

Luke 2:48-49

Why were you searching for me probably means 'Didn't you know I would be in the temple?'

I had to be gives a sense of obligation to God that is controlling Jesus' life.

In my Father's house indicates that, at age 12, he was clearly aware of being the Son of God. He also understood that teaching would be central to his ministry and that his first priority was to serve his heavenly Father. There is an interesting play on the word father when referring to Joseph, who was fulfilling the role of his earthly father, although not his biological father, and God as his true Father.

The word 'house' does not appear in the original Greek text. There is a clear indication from the grammar that another word is implied and house seems relevant as he was in God's temple. However, several translations insert the word 'business' and this too fits what Jesus was saying. Christians too should always be

about their Father's business, i.e. sharing the Gospel and living their lives according to what they have seen and heard.

<sup>50</sup> But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

### Luke 2:50

But they did not understand. This main seem strange for both Joseph and Mary had visitations from angels to explain who their son was but it is also understandable that they could not truly grasp who Jesus was. Even Peter, who would later say: <<**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God**>> (Matthew 16:16), did not grasp what that really meant until after the death and resurrection of his Lord. For similar misunderstandings see:

- <<*All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn't this Joseph's son? they asked*>> (Luke 4:22).
- Performing a miraculous healing in Galilee: <<*But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it*>> (Luke 9:45).
- Predicting his death: <<*The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about*>> (Luke 18:34).
- At the resurrection: <<*In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again*>> (Luke 24:5-7).
- On the Emmaus Road: <<*He said to them, How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?*>> (Luke 24:25-26).
- And appearing to his disciples: <<*Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures*>> (Luke 24:45).

There are also examples where things did become clear, such as: <<*After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken*>> (John 2:22), and: <<*Then Jesus' disciples said, Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech*>> (John 16:29).

<sup>51</sup> Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

#### Luke 2:51

Went down. Jerusalem is on a mountain and therefore geographically higher than many other places: <<*In reply Jesus said: A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho*>> (Luke 10:30a). At other times we will read 'up to Jerusalem'. One always goes up to Jerusalem for the same reason; it is on a mountain.

Luke may emphasise that Jesus was obedient or submissive to his parents to avoid the possible misconception that Jesus' actions in vv.43-49 were disobedient.

His mother treasured was confirmed in v.19. This suggests the possibility that Mary or someone close to her may have been a primary source for the information written by Luke.

<sup>52</sup> And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.

#### Luke 2:52

Jesus grew or increased in wisdom and stature. As can be seen in Luke 1:80 <<*And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel*>>, and again in v.40, where it says: <<*And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him*>>. His true humanity is seen in his learning as other human beings learn.