

SURPRISE SURPRISE!

INTRODUCTION:

How was your Christmas? Christmas is sometimes full of surprises: Family and friends may appear unexpectedly. We may receive gifts which take us by surprise. We may leave our grocery shopping too late and find that the shop has run out of things we needed! I wonder if you were taken by surprise this Christmas.

The passage set as our reading from Luke's Gospel to-day certainly has some surprises:

THE MISSING YEARS: A SURPRISE TO US?

It may be surprising to you that we know almost nothing of Jesus' life between Luke 2:40-41. The Bible has a 12 year silence, although there is a little information:

Verse 40 tells that Jesus *grew and became strong: he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him.*

Verse 41 tells us of Mary and Joseph's annual visits from Nazareth to Jerusalem. We're not told whether Jesus went with them each year however it was normal for a boy to go just before his 13th birthday to be prepared for a special ceremony, the Bar Mitzvah, at which thirteen year old boys were accepted as responsible members of the Jewish community.

The Bible is silent again for eighteen years, except that verses 51-52 tell us some important things about Jesus: He lived in Nazareth and was obedient to his Mother and adopted Father. Mary never forgot what had been said about her son by the angels and Simeon and Anna, nor this extraordinary visit to Jerusalem.

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This is Luke's last reference to Joseph which has led people to think that he had died before Jesus commenced his public ministry.

Luke repeats the fact in verse 52 that *Jesus grew in wisdom* but adds that he grew *in favour with God and men*. Jesus grew physically, spiritually and socially. He read the Scriptures and prayed within the family and at the Synagogue.

We know from Mark 6:3 that Jesus had younger brothers and sisters.

We know from Matthew 13:55 that Joseph was a carpenter and from Mark 6:3 that Jesus was known as *the carpenter*. During those 18 years of which we know nothing more, Jesus was working with his hands. However, as important as carpenters are, as the title of an excellent book by Josh McDowell says, Jesus was *more than a carpenter!* If you haven't read it, then get hold of a copy.

THIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM WAS FULL OF SURPRISES:

We are told very little about the feast of the Passover in this passage but that is not the issue Luke wants us to remember. In this passage Luke isn't filling us in on the ins and outs of The Passover festival. He wants us to know more about Jesus.

There was a huge surprise for Mary and Joseph when they discovered that Jesus was not in their travelling group on their way home to Nazareth. Luke records the details for us in Luke 2:43-46. Once they got back to Jerusalem, it took them three days to find their twelve year old son!

There was also a surprise for the Ministers and others as he sat listening to them and asking questions. *Everyone who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.* (Luke 2:46-47)

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There was even a surprise for Jesus! He was surprised that his parents were searching for him. *Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?* (Luke 2:48-49)

There was another surprise for his parents. Luke records the fact that *they did not understand what he was saying to them.* (Luke 2:50) This was despite God's previous communication to Mary and Joseph through Angels and Prophets. And yet his mother *treasured all these things in her heart.* (Luke 2:51)

At some point, Jesus, Mary and Joseph and maybe his brothers and sisters all headed home from Jerusalem to Nazareth where he was *obedient to them.* (Luke 2:51)

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

The first recorded words of Jesus are a statement about himself and a claim to a relationship with God deeper and different from that which had been known before. (*My Father's House*) Jesus is really claiming here to be the Son of God.

Into this relationship Jesus would later bring all who put their trust in Him. (John 1:12) That includes people from every nation over a period of nearly 2000 years. It includes those of us here today who have put our trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord.

Question: Are you open to being taken by surprise by God?

On the eve of the beginning of a new year, it would be great if, with God's help, we all did three things:

1. Seek to grow in our love for God and our understanding of His Word.
2. Be open to learning and changing as a Christian.

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3. Prayerfully open our hearts and minds to have our views challenged by God's truth which we can know and experience through His revealed Word.