

The **Testimony** of **Luke**

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The Testimony of Luke



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

S. Kent Brown

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About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary, a project by a group of Latter-day Saint specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to Latter-day Saint general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of Latter-day Saint scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers.

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these features distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily

available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefitted from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisors, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series sets in two parallel columns the King James Version (KJV) and a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling this a new “rendition” clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the LDS Church as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the New Rendition in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956, that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

Depending on their personal skills and interests, the authors of these volumes approach their scholarly sources and LDS materials differently, but always with careful exposition and engaging perspectives. In several ways, they employ various interpretive tools, including semantic considerations of Greek vocabulary; cultural, historical, critical, literary, and structural analyses; and intertextual comparisons with other biblical passages, the Book of Mormon, and other scriptural works including the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Observations are also proffered about the doctrinal and spiritual reception of New Testament teachings and practices in the broad LDS religious tradition.

The format also varies moderately from volume to volume regarding introductory materials and the style of commentary. Throughout, Greek and Hebrew terms appear in transliterated form in conformity with standards adopted by the Society of Biblical Literature. In some cases, a volume reproduces the Greek New Testament text, based on the Greek text published by the Society of Biblical Literature (2010) or draws upon the twenty-eighth edition of the Nestle-Aland text in *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2012).

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As with Simeon, Anna's praise arises within sacred precincts, linking the unfolding story of the Christ child more tightly to holiness. Her praise, too, rounds off the sense of promise and fulfillment that weave their way through the songs of Mary and Zacharias and the angels. Further, her status as a respected woman elevates the unfurling events, conferring on them a dignity and a feminine quality that they otherwise lack.

Anna's name brings us back to the question of whether the story of Hannah influences Luke's narrative. Even if it does, this does not mean that we should see Anna as fictional, as a mere symbol. Even if much in Luke's narrative here links back to Hannah and her son Samuel, it is plain that Anna is a real person who comes by inspiration to where Joseph and Mary are. That said, summarizing statements about Jesus seem to tie to similar observations written about Samuel (see 1 Sam. 2:19, 26; 3:19). The statements about Jesus read: "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (2:40) and "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (2:52). As an additional piece, Mary's song as she enters the home of Elisabeth resembles that of Hannah (see 1 Sam. 2:1–10; Luke 1:46–55). And, of course, both Samuel and Jesus come as children of promise, dedicated to God.

THE YOUTHFUL JESUS IN THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE (2:39–52)

(Compare Matt. 2:22–23)

King James Translation

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. 43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem;

New Rendition

39 And when they had finished everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee into Nazareth, their city. 40 And the child grew and was strengthened, being filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him.

41 And his parents went to Jerusalem every year for the festival of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, having gone up according to the custom of the festival, 43 when the days were finished, while they were returning, the child Jesus remained behind

and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

in Jerusalem. And his parents did not know about it. 44 Rather, supposing him to be in the group, they went a day's journey and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances.

45 And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 And after three days, they found him in the temple sitting in the middle of the teachers, both listening to them and querying them. 47 And all who listened to him were amazed at his intelligence and his answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were shocked. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you behaved like this toward us? Look, your father and I have anxiously looked for you." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in the things of my Father?" 50 But they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.

51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52 And Jesus excelled in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and men.

Notes

2:40 *the child grew, . . . and the grace of God was upon him:* This statement recalls similar statements about the young Samuel: "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him" (1 Sam. 3:19; also 2:21, 26). In the cases of Samuel and Jesus, the scriptural record affirms each child's high status before the Lord. In this connection, the Joseph Smith Translation adds significant content to Matthew's account of the maturing of Jesus, underlining his physical strength and tying him explicitly both to the influences of his home and to his divine mission: "And it came to pass that Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come. And he served under his father, and he spake

not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him. And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh” (JST Matt. 3:24–26).

2:41 parents went to Jerusalem every year: The verb (Greek *poreuomai*) stands in the imperfect tense, indicating customary, repeated action.⁷⁹ Is Joseph the main participant in these annual trips because Mary is still in her childbearing years and will, under most circumstances, have to take care of small children at home? We cannot be certain. Women, of course, are allowed an exemption not to attend feasts at the temple, and that will be the case especially during childbearing years.⁸⁰ Even so, as a woman she is expected to attend the Passover celebration if she is able.⁸¹ Hannah exercises a right not to attend because of the situation with the infant Samuel (see 1 Sam. 1:21–23). In Mary’s case, during this year she evidently is not pregnant. Whatever her situation is with her other children, she plainly feels a need to accompany her son and introduce him to the sacred character of the temple and its celebrations. Luke’s statement, of course, fits with his interest in the obedient character of the major players in the account (see the Note on 2:22).

the feast of the passover: In that era, as now, the Passover falls in the springtime. Since Jesus’ birth occurs at the same time of year (see the Note on 2:8), he must have just reached his birthday.

2:42 when he was twelve years old: Much is made of Jesus’ age. According to the Mishnah, the second-century composition of Jewish law, a child is not obliged to attend the three main feasts that adult males are to attend (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles).⁸² Judah ben Tema, a second-century rabbinic teacher, holds that at five, a boy is ready for instruction in scripture; at ten, for instruction in the law; and “at thirteen for [the fulfilling of] the commandments,” thus becoming a responsible member of society.⁸³ However, a young man “twelve years old and one day” becomes responsible for his vows, indicating that he has reached an age at which his words mean something.⁸⁴ Importantly, the *bar mitzvah* rite does not become regularized for Jewish life until the fifteenth century (see the Note on 18:21).⁸⁵

79. BAGD, 698–99; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §§325, 327.

80. *Mishnah Hagigah* 1:1, which responds to the commands that men attend (see Deut. 16:16; Ex. 34:23; also 23:14–15); Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:440.

81. Chaim Richman, *The Holy Temple of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: The Temple Institute and Carta, 1997), 74.

82. *Mishnah Hagigah* 1:1.

83. *Mishnah Pirke Aboth* 5:21.

84. *Mishnah Niddah* 5:6.

85. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2:1200.

they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast: Based on a date recorded for the beginning of the purification by Diaspora Jews for Passover—“eighth of the month of Xanthicus,” which Josephus holds elsewhere to be directly equivalent to the Jewish month of Nisan⁸⁶—he evidently affirms that pilgrims from the Diaspora arrive in Jerusalem at least a week early in order to purify themselves for the Passover which begins on the fourteenth of Nisan.⁸⁷ The regulation rests on the view that territories outside the land of Israel are considered impure (see Josh. 22:19; Hosea 9:3; Amos 7:17). This rule apparently extends to those of Galilee, whose population includes Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Galileans are required to take special steps in preparing for the festival, steps that local residents of Judea do not have to follow, because the outsiders come from an unclean land. Here we compare John 11:55 concerning people who travel from places outside of Judea: “many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.” As a further illustration, gentile countries are considered to be among the “fathers of impurity” (Hebrew *abot ha-tumah*) in that they transmit a severe kind of impurity to individuals.⁸⁸ Hence, we should not think of Jesus and his parents arriving on the eve of the seven-day feast, but perhaps a week before. In fact, authorities set up ritual baths outside the gates of Jerusalem so that arriving pilgrims can bathe and enter the city in a state of ritual purity (see the Notes on 18:35; 19:29; 23:26). In later times, it becomes a burden to observe all Israelite laws in gentile lands and these rules are correspondingly eased (see the Notes on 10:10 and 23:26).⁸⁹ Significantly, Joseph and Jesus will go to the temple to purchase a Passover lamb and perhaps, after entering the Court of Israel beyond the Nicanor Gate, see it slaughtered and listen to the grand Levite choir sing the Hallel songs of thanksgiving (see the Note on 22:8).⁹⁰ This will be Jesus’ first experience with all these special parts of the celebration.

2:43 the child Jesus: Are we to think that “child” (Greek *pais*) describes a twelve-year-old (2:42)? According to Philo, the first-century Jewish savant

86. Josephus, *B.J.* 6.5.3 (§290); Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 73.

87. Josephus, *B.J.* 1.11.6 (§229); Semah Cecil Hyman, “Pilgrimage,” in Berenbaum and Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16:154–55.

88. Hayes, “Purity and Impurity, Ritual,” 16:752–53.

89. *Mishnah Yoma* 3:3; Richman, *Holy Temple of Jerusalem*, 71; Ronny Reich, “Ritual Baths,” in Eric M. Meyers, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Archaeology in the Near East*, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4:430–31; on the need for such baths before Passover, see Hayes, “Purity and Impurity,” 16:753, 754.

90. Richman, *Holy Temple of Jerusalem*, 75, 78–79.

living in Alexandria, Egypt, this Greek term applies to a youth between ages eight and fourteen.⁹¹ The expression could be rendered “the youth Jesus.”

Jesus tarried: Here is the first action verb that describes what Jesus does in his life. The shift in Luke’s focus at this point, moving from Mary and Joseph to Jesus, seems to say that, in the temple at age twelve, Jesus comes to stand at center stage, though he will not begin his ministry until age thirty (see 3:23).

Joseph and his mother: As with verse 33, the oldest texts of Luke read “his parents.” The name Joseph comes into later manuscripts as a theological attempt to affirm that Joseph is not Jesus’ father.⁹²

2:44 in the company: It is typical that pilgrims travel together for the sake of safety (see the Notes on 1:39; 10:30). This group includes “kinsfolk and acquaintance” of Joseph and Mary. Further, it is traditional for poor pilgrims to travel on foot to and from festivals (see the Note on 24:17).⁹³

a day’s journey: The distance will likely take the travelers down to Jericho, a town that offers accommodations and refreshment to travelers (see the Note on 19:5 for Zacchaeus as Jesus’ host in Jericho). Luke’s later account indicates that Jesus reaches Jerusalem in one day from Jericho, though it is largely uphill (see 19:28).

2:45 they turned back again to Jerusalem: If Mary and Joseph make their discovery of Jesus’ absence at the end of the travel day, as seems probable, then they must walk most of the night and reach Jerusalem by early morning. Starting their hunt by undertaking such a hard ascent from Jericho, followed by three days of wearying search, may help to explain the pique in Mary’s words, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?” (2:48).

2:46 after three days: Is there any significance to this length of time? It seems not. The expression means “after three days” whereas Luke’s phrase which points to the resurrection is “on the third day” expressed by a dative of time⁹⁴ (see 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7).

they found him in the temple: The words indicate a thorough search. Most pilgrims, of course, will have already abandoned their lodging and camping sites.⁹⁵ The term for “temple” (Greek *hieron*) refers to the larger temple complex (see 2:27; 18:10; 19:45),⁹⁶ perhaps meaning that Mary and

91. Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 105.

92. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 135.

93. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 58–60.

94. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§1447, 1539–42; Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, §200.

95. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 60–62.

96. BAGD, 373; *TDNT*, 3:232–33, 235.

Joseph find Jesus and his hearers shaded under one of the long porches that run along the edges of the temple grounds. The fact that Jesus is in the temple binds a sense of established sanctity to his words and actions.

in the midst: This phrase also carries a sense of sanctity, as passages in the Old Testament and other scripture attest (see Isa. 12:6; Micah 5:13–14; 3 Ne. 17:12, 24). Jesus is clearly in the middle of the gathering, and he is the holy one. He thus engenders sacred space from his person.⁹⁷

hearing . . . asking . . . questions: The import is that Jesus is the learner. But the Joseph Smith Translation changes the scene to accord with the next verse (“all that heard him”) so that it is Jesus who is the teacher, becoming a Rabbi of sorts: “they were hearing him, and asking him questions” (JST 2:46).

2:47 all that heard him were astonished at his understanding: Although we might be tempted to see a link to the much later *bar mitzvah* ceremony in Luke’s description, that is not the case.⁹⁸ Instead, Luke is telling us that Jesus, but a youth, is staking out his doctrinal ground among the learned of his day, an element that authorities will challenge during his ministry (see 20:1–2).

2:48 they were amazed: Even though Mary and Joseph know something about Jesus’ destiny and have been watching him as he grows up in their home, the scene before them, as described by Luke in 2:46–47, astonishes even them. The Greek verb *ekplēssō* conveys a strong sense of surprise, as it does in 4:32; 9:43; and Acts 13:12.⁹⁹

thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing: The points are two. First, Mary wants to convey to her son that she and Joseph have been searching a long time and that they disapprove of Jesus’ apparent indifference. Second, it appears that Luke casts Joseph as Jesus’ father, in contrast to the notion that he will not be born of a human father (see 1:35; the Notes on 2:33; 2:43; compare “his parents” at 2:41). It is possible that Luke does not always keep this refinement in mind.

2:49 How is it that ye sought me?: Jesus’ reply must catch Mary and Joseph off guard, especially because it comes from a twelve-year-old. But Jesus immediately softens the force of the question by noting that he is in the temple on his “Father’s business.”

97. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 150–52.

98. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:440.

99. BAGD, 243.

about my Father's business: The expression is more abbreviated and less precise in the Greek text than it is in the King James rendition, presenting some ambiguity about the exact meaning of Jesus' comment. Literally, we can translate it, "in the things of my Father," conveying the idea that Jesus has now engaged himself in his Father's affairs. Another possibility is "in my Father's house," pointing to where he has been spending the last three days.¹⁰⁰

2:50 they understood not: Commentators have puzzled over this statement, wondering how Mary and Joseph cannot grasp the significance of what Jesus is doing in the temple, especially in light of the earlier heavenly communiqués they have received about him. But Luke's notation may simply point to Jesus having enjoyed a normal childhood and is now stepping out of that mold and beginning to shoulder the divine responsibility that is his to lift.

2:51 went down with them . . . and was subject unto them: Luke's report, though featuring Jesus' first flight of independence by remaining at Jerusalem after the festival, signals the youth's willing obedience to return home, honoring the earthly family order as the Greek verb *hypotassō* indicates (see the Note on 10:17).¹⁰¹ Moreover, the appearance of the pronoun "them" indicates his respect for Joseph as the father in the home. In a word, Jesus is not rebellious, not insolent, not angered when required to curb his God-given abilities. On the contrary, he is willingly obedient to his parents, illustrating in his actions the need to honor father and mother (see the Notes on 4:38; 18:20).¹⁰² On traveling downward from Jerusalem, see the Note on 2:4.

came to Nazareth: The verb is singular ("he came to Nazareth"), as is the verb "went down," pointing directly to Jesus. Here Luke consciously and firmly shifts the subject of his narrative from others to the Savior.

was subject unto them: This statement, more than any other, underlines Jesus' youthful attitude toward his parents, illustrating that he fully adapts himself to his earthly situation (see the Notes on 4:16 and 8:21).¹⁰³ Further, the statement hints broadly at his attitude toward his society. Like his parents, he is respectful of authority (see the Notes on 2:22–24). The Joseph Smith Translation subtly adds ballast to this observation when introducing Jesus as a learner of a trade: "he served under his father" (JST Matt. 3:25).

100. Marshall, *Luke*, 129.

101. BAGD, 855–56; *TDNT*, 8:43.

102. Balla, *Child-Parent Relationship*, 127–28.

103. *TDNT*, 8:43.

his mother kept all these sayings in her heart: Of the growing treasure trove of experiences with her son, the incident at the temple must stand out in Mary’s mind as a defining moment and remain with her long afterwards (Greek verb *syntēreō*).¹⁰⁴ At last, the angel’s memorable words are being fulfilled, even though her son is just twelve years of age: “He shall be great, and . . . he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever” (1:32–33). Mary especially will be looking for signs of the approach of his grand mission. Significantly, the event at the temple discloses his mission to be one of teaching, not of revolting or conquering.

heart: Along with other passages, the meaning of the Greek term *kardia* here has to do with the heart as the seat of a person’s understanding (see the Note on 2:19).¹⁰⁵

2:52 increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man: Besides mirroring what is said about the youthful John (see 1:80), this assertion reflects very clearly the statements about young Samuel: “the child Samuel grew before the Lord”; “the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men”; and “Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him” (1 Sam. 2:21, 26; 3:19; comp. Judg. 13:24). Besides these obvious ties to the revered prophet and judge, a link to David also appears, expanding how we should understand the youthful Jesus: “David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him” (1 Sam. 18:14). Noting these connections allows us to see Jesus as both the inheritor of the ancient and respected prophetic and judicial mantle as well as the honored crown of Davidic royalty. Even in his youth, Jesus stands within the celebrated circle of prophets, judges, and kings.

Analysis

Although some commentators see the story of the youthful Jesus’ visit to the temple as an independent account that ties to little else that comes before or after it,¹⁰⁶ in reality it stands as a connecting bridge between Luke’s first two chapters and what follows. First, the temple as the center of divine activity holds the early reports together. Within the temple complex, the angel appears to Zacharias; the parents of the infant Jesus present him there; Simeon and Anna find him with the aid of the Spirit; and Simeon prophesies about the infant. This account of the youthful Jesus

104. BAGD, 800; *TDNT*, 8:151.

105. *TDNT*, 3:612.

106. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:435–36.

continues and ties off these temple-centered events. At the other end of the Gospel story, when Jesus comes to the temple as an adult, he is no stranger and, significantly, exhibits unabashed ownership when he takes control of the grounds, rides the sacred precinct of those who have made it “a den of thieves,” and calls it “My house” (see 19:45–47).¹⁰⁷

Second, the connections to the story of Hannah and her son Samuel persist. As we have seen, this story finds ties in Mary’s song (see 1:46–55); in Anna’s name; in the fact that Samuel’s father “went up out of his city yearly” to the sanctuary (1 Sam. 1:3) as does Joseph “every year” (2:41); and in the summary statements about John and Jesus, who both fulfill Luke’s subtle message (see 1:80; 2:52). Moreover, a link to David surfaces in Luke’s words. In his own way, Luke is saying to his readers, “A prophet greater than Samuel has come among us” and “A king more noble than David has stood with us.” Later in the Gospel story, just as Samuel gives a king to his people (see 1 Sam. 8:5–22), so Jesus gives a king to his people—himself (see 19:37–38).

Third, the themes of seeking and finding stand out as vivid threads throughout these accounts. For example, Mary senses the implied command that she find her cousin Elisabeth, who will offer comfort and understanding to the young bride-to-be; the shepherds seek and then find the infant by following the unusual “sign” from the angel; Simeon and Anna find the child with the aid of the Spirit; and Mary and Joseph seek and then find Jesus teaching in the temple. Later, during his ministry, Jesus recites a series of parables about seeking and finding, which include the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, as well as the prodigal son (see 15:3–32). Moreover, in a dark reversal, Judas finds Jesus at Gethsemane (see 22:47–48). In the most important scene of this sort, those who go to find Jesus in the tomb are met by the words of an angel: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (24:5–6). In this light, the one who finds Jesus finds salvation.

Most importantly, Luke’s story of Jesus in the temple brings the focus of his narrative fully onto this extraordinary youth. From this point on, Jesus is not the object of prophecy or adoration, but the subject of Luke’s report. In a few deft words, Luke characterizes Jesus’ ministry as one of teaching. The earlier words of the angel to Mary, “He shall be great” and “he shall reign over the house of Jacob” (1:32–33), are open to wide interpretation. But this account tells readers how Jesus will accomplish this end, in the role of a teacher. As the disciples will later be stunned by Jesus’ revelation that he will die (see 9:22; Mark 8:31), so Mary and Joseph must be

107. Johnson, *Luke*, 60.

surprised at seeing Jesus teach “the doctors” in the temple and then tie this activity to his “Father’s business.” It is no wonder that his mother, his closest observer, “kept all these sayings in her heart.”

In narrating the return of Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, it does not matter whether Luke purposely passes over the story of the flight to Egypt. Rather, we imagine that the many witnesses of the special events associated with the births of John and Jesus raise dark questions in the minds of some who hear, bringing a few to “seek the young child’s life” (Matt. 2:20). One of Luke’s points seems to be that, in returning to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph will be able to raise this special child far from the halls of power in Jerusalem, out of the gaze of hateful and influential eyes (see Matt. 2:19–23).¹⁰⁸

We cannot leave chapter 2 without a comment on geography. On one level, we are reading a tale of three cities, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. The emphasis on place arises with the mention of the three cities and what Jesus does there or what happens to him in such places. Naturally, Nazareth is the place of Jesus’ earthly origin (and that of his parents), of his nurture and that of his siblings, and of his rejection after he teaches in the local synagogue (see 4:16–30). Bethlehem, of course, is the prophesied place of Jesus’ birth (see Micah 5:2) and the place of Herod’s infanticide (see Matt. 2:16). Here birth and death emphasize one another by their juxtaposition in time, though not in Luke’s Gospel because he does not refer to the reprehensible events in Bethlehem, only to Jesus’ birth. The Jerusalem connection is important. In effect, all that has happened beforehand is confirmed in visits to the city. For example, the family comes to Jerusalem for Mary’s purification following Jesus’ birth (see 2:22). While there, Simeon and Anna bear exalted testimony about the infant and his majestic importance (see 2:25–38). In a second scene, Jesus teaches in the temple (2:47; JST 2:46–47). Reversing this order (almost as chiasmus), Jesus will come the last time—significantly, his mother will be in the city, as in the earlier instances—in order (1) to teach in the temple and (2) to redeem sinners. Moreover, Jerusalem is the focused destination of Jesus’ journeying in the central part of the Gospel (see Luke 9:51, 53; 19:11, 28), for he knows that it is to be the place of his death (see 9:31; 13:33).

108. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 110.

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