

Luke 2

Luke 2:1 in those days...there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed

Augustus Caesar reigned from approximately 31 BC to 14 AD. His reign as the emperor of the Roman Empire has become legendary. "It was during Augustus's reign that the ideology of a victorious emperor unifying the world according to an order ordained by the gods was first elaborated...Augustus became the sole ruler of an immense empire [that] was run by an administrative service which would later assume specialized functions and be protected by a standing army. Within it, a regular fiscal system and a universally recognized legal system were established." (*The Harper Atlas of World History*, [NY: Harper Collins, 1992], p. 60) In short, Augustus was the most powerful man of the most powerful empire on the earth.

Orson F. Whitney

"We are too prone to judge by outward appearances. Men are often estimated by what they possess of this world's goods. What would the answer have been two thousand years ago had the question been asked: Who is the greatest man in all the world? Augustus Caesar, the Roman emperor, would doubtless have been the general reply. It would certainly not have been Jesus of Nazareth. And yet in the body of that babe, who was born in a manger, was enshrined the spirit of a God. He came to save that great emperor, if he would be saved. Jesus was infinitely the greater, though cast out and spit upon, and hung as one accursed upon the cross." (Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses*, 5 vols. [Burbank, Calif., and Woodland Hills, Ut.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987-1992], vol. 2, June 21, 1891)

Luke 2:4 the city of David, which is called Bethlehem

Gerald N. Lund

"Bethlehem. The city of David. Ancient homeland of Israel's greatest king. In Hebrew it is called *Beth Lechem*. Literally, *Beth Lechem* means 'The House of Bread.' How perfect that He who was to take the throne of David and become Israel's ultimate king should come to earth in the city of His illustrious ancestor! How fitting that He who would be known as the 'Bread of Life' should enter mortality in the tiny village called 'The House of Bread.' (See John 6:35.)" (*Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991], 12 - 13.)

Luke 2:4 because he was of the house and lineage of David

"Since Jesus was not begotten by mortal man, his descent from David would, by necessity, be through his mother. Thus, when Mary came to earth she was born into that royal lineage so that she could transmit it to her son Jesus. That Mary was of Davidic descent is plainly set forth in the scriptures. Jesus was frequently addressed as 'Son of David.' He did not disclaim that title.

"Paul made it clear that Jesus was of royal blood in his earthly lineage. To the Roman Saints he wrote: 'Jesus Christ our Lord... was made of the seed of David according to the flesh' (Rom. 1:3). And to Timothy he said: 'Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead' (2 Tim. 2:8; see also Acts 13:22-23; 2:30).

"Mary's husband, Joseph, also was 'of the house and lineage of David' (Luke 2:4; see also Luke 1:27; Matt. 1:16, 20; Luke 3:23-31). So Jesus, though not a blood descendant of Joseph, inherited legal status as a son of David through him.

"At that time the Jews were ruled by Rome, and the rights of the royal Davidic family were not recognized. Herod, king of the Jews by Roman appointment, was not even an Israelite, and certainly not of David's line.

"**Elder James E. Talmage** explained: 'Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews' (*Jesus the Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948], p. 87)." (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 78-79.)

Luke 2:4-5 Joseph also went up from Galilee...to be taxed

Gerald N. Lund

"If, as we believe, it was April and not December, then it was very likely Passover season in Jerusalem. This could explain the reason Joseph took Mary on the rigorous, sixty-mile journey to Judea when she was in the final month of her pregnancy. The Roman 'taxing' mentioned by Luke was more accurately a census or enrollment. Each family head had to register and give an accounting of their property so that taxes could be levied. But while there was considerable flexibility in timing allowed to meet this requirement,

if it was Passover season, that would allow them to meet two responsibilities. The Mosaic Law required that every adult male bring his sacrifices before the Lord (i.e., to the temple) each year at Passover. (See Exodus 23:14-19.) So by choosing this time of year, Joseph could fulfill both requirements." (*A Celebration of Christmas: A Collection of Stories, Poems, Essays, and Traditions by Favorite LDS Authors* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988], 36.)

Luke 2:7 she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger

Gordon B. Hinckley

"We were in Jerusalem last year. We went to Shepherd's Field, in the evening after the sun had set, and looked out across those fields to Bethlehem and relived again the timeless and beautiful story of the birth of the Son of God, He who condescended to come to earth, He the Son of the Father, He the Prince of Peace who left His heavenly home to be born into mortality in a simple manger in a vassal state among a hated people. No man who ever walked the earth has touched more lives for greater good than has Jesus of Nazareth. He is our Savior, our Redeemer. He is the Prince of Peace, the Holy One. We love Him. We honor Him. We respect Him. We worship Him. And at this Christmas season, in His holy name, we extend our blessings to people everywhere for peace on earth and good will to men. I like to interpret that as peace on earth and blessings of peace to men of good will. That, I believe, is the essence of the whole thing. How grateful I am for Christmas. How grateful I am for the Son of God, of whom we sing and praise during this season." (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 61.)

Luke 2:7 there was no room for them in the inn

Bruce R. McConkie

"It was the traveling hosts of Judah generally, not just an innkeeper or an isolated few persons, who withheld shelter from Joseph and Mary. Though her state was apparent, the other travelers-lacking in courtesy, compassion, and refinement-would not give way so she could be cared for more conveniently and commodiously. This rude rejection was but prelude to the coming day when these same people and their children after them would reject to their eternal sorrow the Lord who that night began mortality

under the most lowly circumstances." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 1: 91.)

Howard W. Hunter

"On that night in Bethlehem there was no room for him in the inn and this was not the only time during the thirty-three years of his sojourn in mortality that there was no room for him. Herod sent soldiers to Bethlehem to slay the children. There was no room for Jesus in the domain of Herod so his parents took him to Egypt. During his ministry there were many who made no room for his teachings-no room for the gospel he taught. There was no room for his miracles, for his blessings, no room for the divine truths he spoke, no room for his love or faith. He said to them, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Matthew 8:20).

"Even in our day, although two thousand years have passed, there are many who say the same thing that was said on that night in Bethlehem. 'There is no room, no room' (see Luke 2:7). We make room for the gifts, but sometimes no room is made for the giver. We have room for the commercialism of Christmas and even pleasure-seeking on the Sabbath day, but there are times when there is not room for worship. Our thoughts are filled with other things-there is no room." (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, edited by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 42.)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus!" ("Settle This in Your Hearts," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 66)

Luke 2:8 there were in the same country shepherds

"The fields surrounding Bethlehem were home to numerous flocks of sheep, and the month of April was a traditional birthing season for the ewes of the flock, with lambs born almost every night. In their awkward role of midwives to the animals, the shepherds would have stayed up most of the night laboring beneath the crystal sky of the desert plateau; hence, the angels who heralded his birth would not have needed to wake them.

"The boy child who arrived that birthing season was known as 'the Lamb of God.' It is a title of deep significance, for he arrived with the lambs and would someday be 'brought as a lamb to the slaughter' (Isa. 53:7). Yet

paradoxically, he was also the Good Shepherd, one who cares for the lambs....He was the greatest, who made himself least; the heavenly Shepherd who became a lamb...

"The shepherds to whom the angels appeared were the keepers of the temple flocks, a conjecture based on an ancient Jewish tradition that the Messiah would be revealed from *Migdal Eder*, 'the tower of the flock.' The Jewish interpretive text of the *Mishnah* suggests that this could mean none other than the special flocks consecrated to the temple. If this is so, then lambs born years later into those same flocks may have been among those offered in the temple at the time of Christ's Passover sacrifice on the cross. Whether this is so or not, it is certainly the case that his atoning sacrifice was portended even in his birth. An ancient Hebrew tradition held that the Messiah would be born on the Passover. And from astronomical calculation we know that April 6 in the meridian of time was indeed the day of the Passover Feast, that sacred Jewish commemoration of Israel's salvation from the destroying angel that meant death for the firstborn sons of Egypt. It was a salvation granted to each Israelite family that sacrificed a lamb and smeared its blood on the wooden doorposts of their dwelling." (Bruce D. Porter, *The King of Kings*, 21, 23 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the New Testament: The Four Gospels*, by Pinegar, Bassett, and Earl, p. 20-21)

Luke 2:11 unto you is born this day...a Savior

The Latter-day saints have long believed that Jesus was born in the spring and not on December 25. The traditional celebration of his birth in December is a remnant of an old Roman holiday which celebrated the birth of the sun after the winter solstice. There are many evidences suggesting that this could not have been the correct date.

"It has been pointed out that the 6 April 1 B.C. date also explains certain aspects of the New Testament account. For example, the date is during the short lambing season, which would explain why the shepherds were 'keeping watch over their flock by night.' (Luke 2:8.) Moreover, the fact that 'there was no room for them in the inn' (Luke 2:7) suggests that the birth probably occurred at the time of one of the three feasts, such as Passover, at which Jews were required to be in Jerusalem. That proposal is also consistent with the 6 April date." (John P. Pratt, "Passover-Was It Symbolic of His Coming?" *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 44)

Bruce R. McConkie

"Christmas is the traditional rather than the actual birthday of our Lord. As to the actual day and year, scholars generally are in such complete disagreement that reference to their various views does little more than multiply confusion and uncertainty. Authorities can be cited who contend his birth was during every year from B. C. 1 to B. C. 7. Perhaps most of them lean to the conjecture that it was in late 5 B. C. or early 4 B. C.

"From the first sentence of the revelation given to Joseph Smith on the day the Church was organized in this dispensation, it appears that the latter-day kingdom formally came into being on the eighteen hundred and thirtieth anniversary of our Lord's birth. In other words, Christ was born April 6, B. C. 1. (D. & C. 20:1.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-1973], 1: 91.)

Luke 2:14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men

David O. McKay

"How simple these words! How deep, how comprehensive their significance! At Christmas we celebrate his birth in whose mission on earth (1) God is glorified; (2) the earth is promised peace; (3) all men are given the assurance of God's goodwill toward them.

"If every man born into the world would have as the beacon of his life these three glorious ideals, how much sweeter and happier life would be! With such an aim, everyone would seek all that is pure, just, honorable, virtuous, and true—all that leads to perfection; for these virtues he would glorify whoever seeks to glorify God. He would eschew that which is impure, dishonorable, or vile. If every man desired to show goodwill toward men and strove to express that desire in a thousand kind ways and little deeds that would reflect unselfishness and self-sacrifice, what a contribution each would make toward universal peace on earth and the happiness of mankind.

"For nineteen hundred years and more Jesus Christ has been an inspiration to countless millions of men and women. His has been the influence that has fired the imagination of poets; his the influence that has guided the artists' touch that has given imperishable beauty to the world; his the influence that has put new harmony into musicians' souls, and sent vibrating through the ages songs of praise and thanksgiving; his the power that has supported through centuries the humble laborers whose only comfort through unrequited toil and oppression sprang from the realization

that One was standing at the end of life's journey saying, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' ("Matt. 11:28Matt. 11:28); his the influence that has given every good thing to the world today; his the life that was sacrificed to bring peace and goodwill and eternal salvation to all mankind." (Peace and Goodwill by President David O. McKay, *Improvement Era*, 1955, Vol. Lviii. December, 1955. No. 12.)

David O. McKay

"Good old St. Nicholas has long since gone the way of all mortals, but the joy he experienced in doing kindly deeds is now shared by millions who are learning that true happiness comes only by making others happy-the practical application of the Savior's doctrine of losing one's life to gain it. In short, the Christmas spirit is the Christ spirit, that makes our hearts glow in brotherly love and friendship and prompts us to kind deeds of service.

"It is the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, obedience to which will bring 'peace on earth,' because it means-good will toward all men." (*Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay* [Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953], 551.)

David O. McKay

"Peace is the message that came when the Savior was born a Babe in Bethlehem. It was heralded by the angel choir, singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' (Luke 2:14.)

"'Peace,' he said to his disciples toward the close of his ministry, 'These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33.)

"After his resurrection, when the doors were closed and the ten disciples were in session, as he greeted them, his first salutation was, 'Peace be unto you.' (Ibid., 20:21.) And eight days later, when the eleven were there, the same salutation, 'Peace.' (See Ibid., 20:26.)

"What a glorious thing it is, brethren and sisters, and this is my message: Peace cannot be found in external things. Peace comes from within. 'There is no peace except by the triumph of principles,' said the wise Emerson. Peace is within the individual soul. There is no peace when one's

conscience is seared or when one is conscious of having committed some untoward act." (*Conference Report, October 1953, Afternoon Meeting 133.*)

Luke 2:15 Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass

David O. McKay

"The shepherds did not say, 'I wonder if this be true.' They did not say, 'Let us go and see *if* this thing be true'; they said, 'Let us go and see this thing which *is* come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us'-an assurance that God had revealed his Son, that the angels had given to the world the message that he who should be King of kings and Lord of lords had come as a mere babe in the humblest part of that little Judean town.

"What would you give-you who may not have that assurance-to have in your hearts that same confidence that Christ is born, that Christ lives, that God had heralded his birth by angels in heaven? All doubt would be banished, all worry concerning our purpose here in life would cease. That is what such a testimony means." (*Man May Know for Himself: Teachings of President David O. McKay*, compiled by Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967], 466.)

Luke 2:17 they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child

"It will be observed that the testimonies concerning the birth of the Messiah are from two extremes, the lowly shepherds in the Judean field, and the learned magi from the far east. We cannot think this is the result of mere chance, but that in it may be discerned the purpose and wisdom of God...there were classes of people among the Jews whom these lowly shepherd witnesses could not reach, and had they been able to reach them, the story of the angel's visit, and the concourse of angels singing the magnificent song of Peace on earth, good will to men would doubtless have been accounted an idle tale of superstitious folk, deceived by their own over-wrought imaginations or idle dreams. Hence God raised up another class of witnesses-the wise men from the east-witnesses that could enter the royal palace of proud King Herod and boldly ask: Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." (quoted in *Jesus the Christ*, 108-109)

Luke 2:19 Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart

In the middle of the night, when all were asleep except mother and hungry infant, Mary had a special time to love, ponder, and wonder. What would Mary have thought about as she held the light of the world in the darkness of the night?

"Mary...did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
The child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.

"Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby you've kissed the face of God.

"The blind will see...
The deaf will hear...
The dead will live again.
The lame will leap...
The dumb will speak
The praises of the Lamb!

"Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding is the Great I Am."

(Mark Lowry, "Mary Did You Know," [Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 1998])

Neal A. Maxwell

"Mary, in the midst of her wonderment at the birth of Jesus, needed time to ponder all that the visiting shepherds and others had said. So she trusted; and 'Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2:19). Bright and perceptive, Mary still doubtless found, as did Alma, that she could not 'speak the smallest part' of what she felt (Alma 26:16)." (*If Thou Endure It Well* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 58.)

Luke 2:21 **the circumcision of the child**

Bruce R. McConkie

"He must be circumcised. When eight days old, neither before nor after, this sacred rite must be performed. The Seed of Abraham must have written in his flesh the token of the covenant that he himself, as Jehovah, had made with Abraham his father. As the Giver of the covenant he must also be the heir of its obligations and of its blessings; and as we noted at the circumcision of John, the Abrahamic covenant is one of eternal increase and exaltation for all of the faithful.

"Through circumcision the in male children in Israel become subject to the law. And Jesus, one of these children, though he came to fulfill the law, came also to obey all of its requirements; even he will conform to the law, as each event in his life requires, until that day when it shall be nailed with him to the cross, there to die, so that a new law can rise with him as he comes forth from the tomb in a newness of life. We might even be permitted to indulge the thought that Christ's blood, first shed at circumcision, was to keep the old Mosaic law, while that same blood, shed in Gethsemane and at Calvary, was to abolish the old law and bring in the new-the new law that would ever thereafter govern all men." (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979-1981], 1: 351.)

Luke 2:22 when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished

The Law of Moses proscription for purification after childbirth seems strange to the modern mind. However, the law taught important principles of cleanliness to a society which suffered from a very poor understanding of personal hygiene and medicine. When originally given, the law was designed to use concepts of physical cleanliness and hygiene as a metaphor for spiritual cleanliness and holiness. After a male child was born, the mother was to complete a process of purification for 40 days. During this time period, her husband could not approach her in a sexual way. This allowed appropriate time for her to recover from the trauma of childbirth. During the time of purification, she was to refrain from normal activity, particularly in religious ordinances, except for the circumcision of male children (see Lev. 12).

"...*unclean*, in the Mosaic sense did not...suggest something disgusting or filthy, nor did it imply that the body or the natural functions of the body, such as childbirth or sexual relations, were inherently evil. 'The term *unclean* in this and the following cases, is generally understood in a mere *legal* sense, the rendering a person *unfit for sacred ordinances*' (Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:559)

"...'In Canaan, prostitution and fertility rites were all mixed up with worship. In Israel, by sharp contrast, anything suggesting the sexual or sensual is strictly banned from the worship of God...The intention is not to write off this side of life as dirty, as is plain elsewhere in scripture. The purpose is to ensure its separation from the worship of God. The rule of strict cleanliness in all sexual matters was also a positive safeguard to health' (Alexander and Alexander, *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 176.)" (*Old Testament Institute Manual: Gen - 2 Sam.*, p. 174)

Interestingly, Mary's birth of the Christ child was an act of holiness not uncleanness. Through a conception produced without sexual intercourse, Mary became the only virgin mother. That there would be an ordinance for her to purify herself is rather ironic since she had no reason to be purified, for she had not been sullied.

"...just as Christ, though not subject to the Law, wished, nevertheless, to submit to circumcision and the other burdens of the Law, in order to give an example of humility and obedience; and in order to show His approval of the Law; and, again, in order to take away from the Jews an excuse for calumniating Him: for the same reasons He wished His Mother also to fulfil the prescriptions of the Law, to which, nevertheless, she was not subject.

"Although the Blessed Virgin had no uncleanness, yet she wished to fulfil the observance of purification, not because she needed it, but on account of the precept of the Law." (Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, part 3, Article 4)

Luke 2:23 every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord

"The firstborn of every family was to be consecrated to the service of Jehovah as a priest, while the firstborn of all clean animals were to be offered as a sacrifice...The law was a constant reminder that all things belonged to God, who had given his own firstborn as the great and last sacrifice. Obviously, it was also a reminder of what the Lord had done in preserving the firstborn of Israel in Egypt. Afterwards the tribe of Levi was consecrated to the priestly service in lieu of the firstborn of all the tribes. Still, the firstborn of the other tribes were released from this bond only by the payment of a redemption tax of five shekels apiece to the priests of the temple. Joseph and Mary complied with this law when they brought the Christ child to the temple forty days after his birth (Luke 2:23-24)." (Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Gospel Symbolism* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999], 51.)

Luke 2:25-38 The testimonies of Simeon and Anna

Dallin H. Oaks

"Apostles have the calling and ordination to be special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), but the duty to witness and testify of Christ at all times and in all places applies to every member of the Church who has received the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

"The book of Luke records two examples of this. In obedience to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem after forty days, to present him to the Lord. There, two aged and spiritual temple workers received a witness of his identity and testified of him. Simeon, who had known by revelation from the Holy Ghost that he should not taste of death until he had seen the Messiah, took the infant in his arms and testified to his divine mission. (See Luke 2:25-35.) Anna, whom the scripture called 'a prophetess' (Luke 2:36), recognized the Messiah 'and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem' (Luke 2:38).

"Anna and Simeon were eyewitnesses to the infant, but, just like the Apostles, their knowledge of his divine mission came through the witness of the Holy Ghost. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' (Rev. 19:10.) Therefore, we can properly say that when each received this witness, Simeon was a prophet and Anna was a prophetess. Each then fulfilled the prophetic duty to testify to those around them. As Peter said 'To [Christ] give all the prophets witness.' (Acts 10:43.) This was what Moses meant when he expressed the wish 'that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!' (Num. 11:29.)" (Dallin H. Oaks, "Witnesses of Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 30)

Luke 2:34-35 this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel...that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed

The response of the Israelites to Jesus of Nazareth defined their generation. Isaiah had prophesied that he would be 'for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken' (Isa. 8:14-15). Indeed, as the Jews rejected Jesus, they stumbled spiritually; they fell from God's grace; their covenants were broken; they were snared and taken captive by Satan's awful chains of darkness.

Furthermore, the Lord had in mind to reveal the hidden thoughts of the self-righteous and hypocritical in Israel. He did it by sending his Son to them to see how they would react to his claims that he was the Son of God. Their response to him determined whether they were to rise or fall in Israel. Similarly, our response to Jesus determines whether we are to rise or fall in Israel. Our response to Him reveals the true thoughts and intents of our hearts.

Luke 2:35 *Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also*

Harold B. Lee

"May I take you to a sacred scene portraying one whose all seemed slipping from her grasp and let you feel her strength in a fateful hour! Huddled at the foot of the cross was the silent figure of a beautiful middle-aged mother with shawl drawn tightly about her head and shoulders. Cruelly tormented on the cross above her was her first-born son. One can but feebly understand the intensity of the suffering of Mary's mother-heart. She now faced in reality the import of old Simeon's doleful prediction as he had blessed this son as a tiny infant child, 'He shall be as a sign for to be spoken against; Yea, a sword shall pierce thine own heart also.' (Luke 2:34-35.)" (*Conference Report, April 1958, Afternoon Meeting 134.*)

Luke 2:37 *she was a widow of about fourscore and four years*

We would assume that Anna was age 84 not that she had been widowed for 84 years. Nevertheless, she was truly 'of great age.' But this poorly known prophetess is truly a scriptural heroine. Today, there are so many like her. These widows have not wasted their time wallowing in self-pity but have refined their spiritual sensitivities by serving 'God with fastings and prayers night and day.' They are those who have used their time in performing the work of the Lord in his holy temples. Their work is done so quietly, their demeanor so unassuming, as to be noticed by almost no one. But their devotion does not go unnoticed by the all-piercing eye of God. After years of faithful service, they, like Anna of old, will behold the face of God. Such is the reward of those who are pure in heart.

Spencer W. Kimball

"Now, the General Authorities are very much aware of the fact that many of our sisters are widows...We want all such sisters to understand that when we speak of family life, it is not done to make them feel sad or

unappreciated. The leaders of the Church have said often, and clearly, that women in such circumstances include some of the most noble spirits of our Father in heaven. Those who make the best of what life has given to them will be rewarded for all that they have done in the service of our Heavenly Father and their fellowman.

"Those of you who do not now experience the traditional woman's role, not by choice, but for reasons beyond control, can still do so much to help others. Your talents and time must not be misused simply because not all of the preferred ways of sharing and giving are open to you presently." (*My Beloved Sisters* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], 11.)

Luke 2:42 when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem

"By custom, a Jewish boy at the age of 12 was taken to Jerusalem at one of the feasts and tested by the doctors of the law in the temple as to his knowledge of the duties and privileges to which he had been admitted. In passing this test, he was regarded as taking upon himself the yoke of the law. Thus Jesus, according to custom, was at the temple at age 12." (Source: Bible Dictionary, LDS edition of the King James Bible, p. 660.)

"Luke records that at the age of twelve, Jesus, perhaps what would now be called a *bar mitzvah*, a 'son of the commandment' and a man in his own right, accompanied his parents into the holy city for the Feast of the Passover. It was expected that those men who resided within a reasonable distance of Jerusalem would go to the city to celebrate three sacred occasions: the feasts of Passover ('feast of unleavened bread,' in the spring of the year), Pentecost (the feast of 'first fruits,' fifty days after Passover), and Tabernacles (the 'feast of booths,' held during the fall of the year). Frequently large caravans of Israelites would travel together to enjoy the social benefits occasioned by the pilgrimages, as well as to protect themselves from marauding bands of robbers. It was at the end of a week of feasting and celebration following Passover that Mary and Joseph discovered, after a full day's journey from Jerusalem, that their twelve-year-old was missing. 'And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors [the scribes, the experts on the law], and *they were hearing him, and asking him questions*. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding, and answers.' (JST, Luke 2:46-47, emphasis added.) Already we see in the mind and soul of the young Messiah the spiritual depth and infinite wisdom that would characterize his ministry. Even as a boy he demonstrated the originality and freshness and animation that comes only through one who is imbued

with the powers of his Eternal Father. Indeed, Jesus 'taught them as one having authority from God, and not as having authority from the scribes.' (JST, Matt. 7:37.)" (Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986], 154 - 155.)

Luke 2:43-44 Joseph and his mother...supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey

I have always been fascinated with this story. How could Joseph and Mary begin their travels without making sure Jesus was with them? Are we to conclude that they were neglectful parents? Certainly not! Rather, this story tells us something of young Jesus. All parents know that there are certain children who require more supervision than others. Some obedient and mild mannered children require almost no direction at all, while others are so mischievous that their parents don't dare take their eyes off them. From this story, we learn that Jesus was a child who was always in the right place at the right time. He was always doing what he was supposed to do. He was so trustworthy that his parents figured he must be with the group somewhere. Indeed, what child would have required less parental direction than Jesus? The scripture states 'he needed not that any man should teach him' (JST Matt 3:25). Therefore, it is quite ironic that while his parents imagined he was where he was supposed to be-among the traveling party-the place where he was *really* supposed to be was teaching in the temple.

Luke 2:46 sitting in the midst of doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions

Neal A. Maxwell

"In the Joseph Smith translation of these verses, we learn that the learned doctors 'were hearing [Jesus], and asking him questions.' (JST Luke 2:46-47.) Still later in His ministry, it is no wonder that those who sought to interrogate Him finally reached the point where no man 'durst ask him any question.' (Mark 12:34.) Had He been merely a brilliant mortal-taught solely by mere mortals, however bright-such contemporaries could have expected to engage Him and to interrogate Him successfully. However, Jesus received special tutoring. He told some, 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.' (John 5:19.)" (*Plain and Precious Things* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], 41.)

Joseph Smith

"When still a boy He had all the intelligence necessary to enable Him to rule and govern the kingdom of the Jews, and could reason with the wisest and most profound doctors of law and divinity, and make their theories and practice to appear like folly compared with the wisdom He possessed; but He was a boy only, and lacked physical strength even to defend His own person; and was subject to cold, to hunger and to death." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 392 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the New Testament: The Four Gospels*, by Pinegar, Bassett, and Earl, p. 33)

Luke 2:49 **How is it that ye sought me?**

Jesus Christ was born with a veil of forgetfulness just as all men are. He did not receive 'of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace' (DC 93:12). How remarkable, then, that Jesus understood his mortal mission by the tender age of 12! For many of the rest of us, we don't understand the nature of our individual missions until our mortal experience is almost over—certainly not by the age of 12! While Christ's early years were punctuated by a gradual increase in wisdom, advancing from grace to grace, some of the rest of us spent those same tender years proceeding instead from *disgrace to disgrace*. How great is the contrast between us and Him!

James E. Talmage

"In such simplicity is the normal, natural development of the Boy Jesus made clear. He came among men to experience all the natural conditions of mortality; He was born as truly a dependent, helpless babe as is any other child; His infancy was in all common features as the infancy of others; His boyhood was actual boyhood, His development was as necessary and as real as that of all children. Over His mind had fallen the veil of forgetfulness common to all who are born to earth, by which the remembrance of primeval existence is shut off. The Child grew, and with growth there came to Him expansion of mind, development of faculties, and progression in power and understanding. His advancement was from one grace to another, not from gracelessness to grace; from good to greater good, not from evil to good, from favor with God to greater favor, not from estrangement because of sin to reconciliation through repentance and propitiation." (*Jesus the Christ*, 105)

Henry D. Taylor

"For mortal man, with all his limitations and weaknesses, to achieve perfection might seem impossible, but the Savior's admonition, given on several different occasions, would indicate that such a worthy goal is attainable.

"We recognize that the Savior achieved perfection. However, it was a gradual and continuing process, extending from childhood to maturity. John, the beloved apostle, attests to this natural development in these words: 'And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace . . . until he received a fulness.' (D&C 93:12-13.)

"When he was but 12 years of age, Jesus realized that he was the son of a divine father. When Joseph and Mary, his mother, found him conversing with the wise men in the temple and mildly chided him because of their concern, he replied: '. . . wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' (Luke 2:49.) Yet the full comprehension of the purpose of his earthly mission developed within him only as he progressed step by step in unfolding experience and wisdom.

"Perfection came to Jesus through many experiences, which involved trials and sorrows. Although begotten of an immortal father, he was born of a mortal mother, through whom he inherited the capacity to be tempted, to suffer, and to die. The apostle Paul testified: 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' (Heb. 5:8-9.)

With the Lord Jesus as an example, we should desire and attempt to pattern our lives after his and follow his teachings in our quest for perfection." (*Conference Report, October 1967, Afternoon Meeting 140.*)

Luke 2:49 wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

James E. Talmage

"How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

"Let us not say that there was unkind rebuke or unfilial reproof in the answer of this most dutiful of sons to His mother. His reply was to Mary a reminder of what she seems to have forgotten for the moment-the facts in

the matter of her Son's paternity. She had used the words 'thy father and I'; and her Son's response had brought anew to her mind the truth that Joseph was not the Boy's father. She appears to have been astonished that One so young should so thoroughly understand His position with respect to herself. He had made plain to her the inadvertent inaccuracy of her words; His Father had not been seeking Him; for was He not even at that moment in His Father's house, and particularly engaged in His Father's business, the very work to which His Father had appointed Him?

"He had in no wise intimated a doubt as to Mary's maternal relationship to Himself; though He had indisputably shown that He recognized as His Father, not Joseph of Nazareth, but the God of Heaven. Both Mary and Joseph failed to comprehend the full import of His words." (*Jesus the Christ*, 108)

Harold B. Lee

"As a young boy of twelve years, Jesus, after having been found in the temple by Joseph and Mary, in response to their inquiry asked a significant question: 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' (Luke 2:49.) What did he mean by His Father's business?

"In another revelation the Lord gave meaning to that young boy's question. To the elders of the Church assembled in Kirtland, Ohio, He impressed upon them their great responsibilities as holders of the sacred priesthood office of elder. 'Wherefore,' said he, 'as ye are agents, ye are on the Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.' (D&C 64:29.)

"When one becomes a holder of the priesthood, he becomes an agent of the Lord. He should think of his calling as though he were on the Lord's errand. That is what it means to magnify the priesthood. Think of the Master asking each of you, as this young boy did of Joseph and Mary, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Whatever you do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business." (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], 255.)

Luke 2:51 he went down with them...and was subject unto them

Henry B. Eyring

"Might this be a good lesson and example for those of us who have perhaps exceeded our own parents in terms of educational opportunities and other worldly advantages but still owe them so much for so much that is most precious?"

"At the time Jesus was baptized He knew who He was, and yet He willingly submitted to proper priesthood authority and discipline (see Matt. 3:13-15)." (*On Becoming a Disciple Scholar* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 57.)

Luke 2:51 his mother kept all these sayings in her heart

No person on the earth would have had the same perspective on the birth of the Savior as humble Mary. In this chapter, we see how spiritual and thoughtful she was. After the visit by the shepherds, she 'kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (v. 19). After the prophecy of Simeon, she and Joseph 'marvelled at those things which were spoken of him' (v. 33). After Jesus' response at the temple, she 'kept all these sayings in her heart.' Interestingly, we learn that when Jesus said he must be about his Father's business, Mary did not understand what he meant. Yet, she kept this saying in her heart. She dare not forget those most notable moments in raising Jesus. She kept things in her heart so that she could record them for posterity. Indeed, as we read Luke 2, we quickly realize that the stories in this chapter could come to us only from Mary. Who else knew about the visit of the shepherds? How else would Luke know what Mary had 'pondered in her heart'? Who was at the circumcision other than Joseph and Mary? Whether from a written record or an oral tradition, the message of Luke 2 comes to us from the mother of the Lord. As Luke stated, he had taken his record from those who were eyewitness 'from the beginning' (Lu. 1:2). The greatest eyewitness of things 'from the beginning' was undoubtedly Mary.

Luke 2:52 Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man

James E. Talmage

"Concerning the home life of Joseph and his family in Nazareth, the scriptural record makes but brief mention. The silence with which the early period of the life of Jesus is treated by the inspired historians is impressive; while the fanciful accounts written in later years by unauthorized hands are full of fictitious detail, much of which is positively revolting in its puerile inconsistency...With hallowed silence do the inspired scribes honor the boyhood of their Lord; he who seeks to invent circumstances and to invest the life of Christ with fictitious additions, dishonors Him." (*Jesus the Christ*, 104)

Ezra Taft Benson

"My text, from Luke in the New Testament, stands out boldly in its impressive beauty. It covers a period of eighteen years following the return of Jesus from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Except for this one rich sentence of greatest import, the scriptures for this eighteen-year period are silent: 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' (Luke 2:52.)

"Here, then, in one sentence-fourteen words-is the impressive, meaningful, and comprehensive account of eighteen years of preparation of the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

"Here, in broad outline, in one succinct sentence-four points-are given the major fields of man's activity and striving: mental, physical, spiritual, and social.

"Young men and women, remember, it is people, not things, that are all-important. Character is the one thing we make in this world and take with us into the next. God's purpose is to build people of character, not physical monuments to their material accumulations." (*God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], 2)

Jack H. Goaslind

"'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man' (Luke 2:52; see JST, Matt. 3:24-26). In other words, the Savior developed ... intellectually (in wisdom and knowledge), physically (in stature), socially (in favor with man), and spiritually (in favor with God)' (Joe J. Christensen, "Resolutions," *Ensign*, Dec. 1994, 62; emphasis added).

"Most Latter-day Saints are genuinely motivated to acquire the qualities of our Savior. We should be pleased to discover that much of this growth and refinement comes to us as a natural consequence of simply living the gospel. For example, as we love and serve others in Christlike ways, we too are blessed by the Lord with increased love, spiritual capacity, and an overall refinement of our own gifts, graces, and abilities. Indeed, much is added unto us by the Lord if we use our time here on earth wisely, above all preparing to meet God and seeking first his kingdom (see Alma 12:24; Matt. 6:33)." ("Look to the Future with Optimism," *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, 27)

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