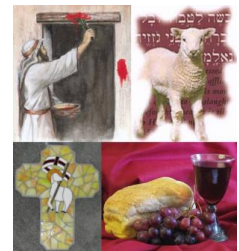


## 1. Introduction

Happy New Year! May the Lord bless you in 2009! The first days of the year are not inherently different than other days, but we choose to make them a special time of reflection and of renewal. I think that perhaps every culture has special times like this. In Jesus' time, the Jews had three festivals each year (see *Deuteronomy 16:16*) during which all the men journeyed to Jerusalem to visit the temple, and many took their families along.

One of these times was Passover. At Passover, they offered a lamb in sacrifice and shared the Passover meal in memory of the time when the Lord led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt. In **Deuteronomy 16:1**, it says, "**Observe the month of Abib (also called Nisan. Humor: not Toyota, Honda, or Mazda, it is Nissan) and celebrate the Passover of the Lord your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night.**" Since the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, the Jews no longer offer animal sacrifice or journey to Jerusalem, but Passover is still celebrated with a special meal and prayers. This year, the Jewish Passover will begin at sunset on April 8<sup>th</sup> and the seven-day feast of unleavened bread, which occurs together with Passover, will continue until April 15<sup>th</sup>.

In memory of Jesus' resurrection, we will celebrate Easter on April 12<sup>th</sup> this year, in the middle of the Passover week. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples and told them to continue sharing the bread and wine in memory of Him. This, of course, is communion. So, communion is, in a sense, our Passover meal. Before the Lord saved the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He commanded them to sacrifice a lamb and to place some of the blood around the door of their homes (see *Exodus 12*). Those who were, "under the blood," of the lamb were safe. For us, the bread and cup of communion symbolize the body and blood of Jesus, and we remember that we are saved because we are, "under the blood," of Jesus, the perfect Passover lamb.



Passover looks back to the Exodus from Egypt, but it also points forward to Jesus, because Jesus fulfilled the meaning of Passover in His death on the cross. At the cross, the blood of Jesus, (John 1:29) "**the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,**" saves us from our sins. Joseph and Mary were devout Jews, so they naturally went to Jerusalem for Passover every year. With this background in mind, let's take a look at today's Bible passage, which records the events of a particular Passover celebration. Let's read Luke 2:41-52.



## 2. Scripture Luke 2:41-52 (NIV)

[41] Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. [42] When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. [43] After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. [44] Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. [45] When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. [46] After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. [47] Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. [48] 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." [49] "**Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"** [50] But they did not understand what he was saying to them. [51] Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. [52] And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

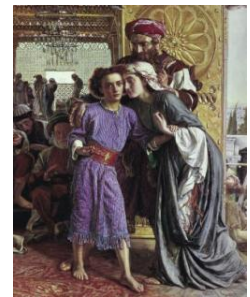
### 3. Teaching

In those days, and sometimes still today, people going to Jerusalem for Passover go in large groups with friends and relatives. They traveled in a procession, and the men might have gathered into one group and the women into another as they walked and talked. So, it might be easy to assume that an older boy who is out of view for a while must be with the other parent or with friends. In any case, however it happened, Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem without Jesus and traveled a whole day before realizing that Jesus was not with them. When they realized their mistake, they searched for Jesus. When they finally found Him back in Jerusalem in the temple, they were both relieved and angry with Him. But when they scolded Him, His reply left them baffled, they did not understand what He was talking about.



How about us? Have we ever been so busy all day long that we completely forgot about Jesus? Have we ever been angry about Jesus? Have we ever been baffled by Jesus' words or actions? Most of us have experienced these struggles in our relationship with Jesus at one time or another. And I think a major cause of our struggles is that we sometimes forget who Jesus really is. This happened to Joseph and Mary, their difficulties came when they forgot, perhaps just for a little while, who Jesus really is. This is very interesting because it shows that Joseph, Mary, and the boy Jesus had settled down into a pretty ordinary family life. You can find some made-up stories about childhood miracles of Jesus in other writings, but in the Bible, there is no mention of Jesus doing any miracles until after He began His ministry at about thirty years of age. After the many amazing miracles surrounding Jesus' birth, apparently years passed without any further dramatic signs revealing Jesus' true identity.

After returning from Egypt, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus seem to have lived a pretty normal family life in Nazareth. Joseph worked as a carpenter, and he and Mary settled into life as husband and wife. Joseph also assumed the role of father over his adopted son, Jesus. And so, in **Luke 2:48**, we read, **“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.””** Mary knew very well that Joseph was not Jesus' true father, but Joseph had taken the role of Jesus' earthly father.



When we first meet Jesus, we are very excited just to know Him. Most new Christians are very joyful in their relationship with Jesus. But as the years go by, often without any obvious miracles, sometimes we get comfortable in our relationship with Jesus and we stop thinking about how special and wonderful it really is. This seems to have happened to Joseph and Mary. They had gotten comfortable as a family, and they were no longer thinking about who Jesus really is. So, Jesus reminds them. **Luke 2:49-50**, **“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. ‘Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?’ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.”**



Jesus' words are a gentle rebuke. Jesus' real Father is God. And so, Jesus being in the temple, God's House, is to be expected. Notice that Jesus calls God, **“my Father.”** The Jews sometimes called God, **“our Father,”** but they never called God, **“my Father.”** When Jesus said, **“my Father,”** He was claiming an exclusive and unique relationship with God. And, in this case, Jesus is also emphasizing that Joseph is not His real father. Joseph and Mary needed to be reminded that Jesus is the Son of God. We also need to be reminded that Jesus is God come in the flesh. It is good to have a close and intimate relationship with Jesus; He calls those who love Him friends and brothers and sisters, adopted members of the Household of God. But we should remember who Jesus is; Jesus is God come in the flesh.

Jesus' presence in the temple on that day was also probably the fulfillment of the prophecy of Genesis 49:10, but since we talked about that only a few weeks ago, I won't go through it again today. In any case, Joseph and Mary did not understand the full meaning of Jesus' words, but it seems that they did not rebuke Him any further either. Jesus also dropped the issue after having gently reminded them of His true identity. And



then Jesus set a wonderful example for us of how to deal with difficult situations in relationships. **Luke 2:51, “Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.”**

Mary treasured these things in her heart. But Jesus, God the Son come in the flesh, went down to Nazareth and was, **“obedient to them.”** Some translations say Jesus **“was subject to them.”** Either way, the meaning is clear. Jesus submitted to Joseph and Mary. Now, think about it. Jesus was wiser than them. He was more powerful than them. He was more holy than them. In every way, Jesus was a better and greater person than Joseph or Mary, but still, Jesus submitted to them.

Have you ever had trouble getting along with a boss where you work? Have you ever had trouble getting along with a teacher at school, or a leader at church? Have you had trouble getting along with your parents? Jesus sets the example of how to solve most of these relationship problems. Obey. Submit. Our pride rises with objections: But, my parents are unreasonable! But, I’m smarter than my boss! But, that teacher was being rude! But, that church leader is wrong! All of that may or may not be true. But the solution is the same. Leave all those issues with God and submit to those over you.



Through submitting to His parents, Jesus submitted to God, His heavenly Father. Because the Scripture commands us, **Exodus 20:12, “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”** There is actually a lot about submission in Scripture. For example:

**Romans 13:5, “Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.”**

**Colossians 3:18, “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”**

**Ephesians 5:21, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”**

**Hebrews 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”**

A little bit of submission can be a big help in solving relationship problems. It is not about whether they are right about the facts or not. It is about whether you are doing the right thing in the relationship. And if they have authority over you, then it is right to submit to them. Through submitting to them, we also submit to God.

But, are there limits to submission? Are there times when we should not submit? Well, when Jesus had to be at the temple, He said to Joseph and Mary, in **Luke 2:49b, “Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?”** In some translations, it reads, (NKJV), **“Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”** Jesus is showing us that submission to God takes precedence. When submission to earthly authorities is incompatible with submission to God, then we need to submit to God, even if it means rejecting the wishes of earthly authority figures. Heavenly business takes precedence over earthly affairs. So, yes, there are limits to submission. But in most cases we should submit, following the example of Jesus.

When Jesus sat among the teachers at the temple, **(Luke 2:47), “Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.”** Even at twelve years old, Jesus was an amazing person, full of understanding and knowledge. But Jesus still submitted to those over Him. And, **Luke 2:52,** tells us, **“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”** Jesus could have drawn on His power as God and skipped all of that learning and studying; He could have come into this world as a wise man or a mighty king. But He didn't. He came as a little baby and He grew up as little boys grow up. Jesus took the time to experience what it means to be human so that we would know that He understands the trials and struggles of this life. This is all part of



the amazing miracle of the incarnation of Christ Jesus. Jesus took time to grow and to experience what it means to live as a man.

Jesus did not begin His public ministry until He was thirty years old. From the age of twelve to thirty, for eighteen years, He waited patiently. But when the time was right, He did not hesitate. Jesus knew when it was time to wait and when it was time to act. We need to learn good timing also. Some of us want to hurry up and get going without waiting for the right time. Americans, perhaps, are more likely to make this mistake. But others make the opposite mistake; they wait, and wait, and wait, past the time when they should have taken action. Japanese people sometimes make this mistake. Of course, each person is different, but we all want to learn to pray and listen to the Lord's voice, so that we can know when to wait and when to take action.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Jesus, in the fullness of time, at just the right time, went to the cross as our Passover Lamb, and fulfilled His mission as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus is our example for how to live, and in His death He is our Savior. Jesus is Lord and God. It takes time to know Jesus and to learn to walk with Him in our daily life. But the journey begins with a single step; the step of inviting Jesus into your heart and confessing that He is Lord. There is no need to wait before starting the journey of faith. It is a new year; it is a good time to begin the journey, or to take new steps to grow in faith. I pray that in 2009, we will all grow closer to Jesus in every way. Let's pray.



#### **5. Closing Prayer**