Jesus’ Childhood

Lesson Overview

1. Critical Thinking
   Compare the Christmas stories in Matthew and Luke.

2. Watch a Video
   Watch Luke 2:21-51 at bit.ly/GCEDShepherds from 24min 22sec to 35min 08sec (10min 46sec).

3. Discuss

New Church Concept

Jesus’ States

Like all people, the Lord first passed through a sensory state. For people are first sensory; then natural, rational, spiritual; and lastly, if the third degree is opened...becomes celestial, like an angel of the third heaven.... When He was in the world the Lord entered into...the Word in its internal sense, even to the highest. For when the Lord was in the world, He was the Word, because He was the Divine truth, and that was the case more interiorly by degrees, as He grew up, even to the highest, which is purely Divine, entirely above the perceptions of the angels. During His life in the world the Lord successively advanced to union with the very Divine that was in Him from conception. See Apocalypse Explained 918.11,12

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Watch a Video

The Christmas details of Jesus’ life are very familiar. So in thinking about His childhood we will take a look at incidents that are lesser-known.

Watch Luke 2:21-51 online at bit.ly/GCEDShepherds. (Enter bitly link in the browser bar at the top of your screen.) The video covers the entire gospel. Start at 24min 22sec and watch to 35min 08sec; 10min 46sec. The actors in the story speak in a Hebrew dialect. The narrator reads from the gospel in English so it is easy to follow along.

These stories teach incidents that happened, but we also learn that Jesus grew up in a family (Luke 2:12; Matthew 12:47-50). Jesus’ brother James became a leader in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. (See Acts 1:13-14; 12:17; 15:13).
Discuss
Choose questions to discuss the story.

1. What was Jesus’ purpose in coming into the world?
2. How was Jesus different from other children? Why is this difference key to who He was and what He came to do?
3. Jesus’ life is a model for our life. In what ways is our life-purpose different from Jesus’? In what ways is it similar?
4. It is normal for young children to have temper tantrums. Tantrums signal that children are becoming self-aware, discovering boundaries, learning how to live in order, and how to treat others. Do you picture Jesus having tantrums when he was little? Why or why not? (See sidebar on right.)
5. The Word gives few facts about Jesus’ infancy. We know he went to Jerusalem when he was twelve. Aside from this we know nothing about what he was like—who his friends were, how he lived, where he went. Would knowing more help us know Him better?
6. People are born without a set purpose in life. We develop our own purpose gradually as we learn and choose a pathway for ourselves. Unlike us, Jesus was born with an identity and purpose. He had to discover His identity and become true to it. He had a will for good. His soul and inner self were divine, from God Himself. How would having an identity and discovering your purpose in life be different than choosing your own path?
7. Would people who met Jesus as a child have known He was special?
8. Imagine you were Jesus’ brother. How would it feel to have a brother who was so wise and perfect? A brother who was more concerned with discussing spiritual issues than playing with you?
9. One of the ways we learn is by making mistakes. Did Jesus make mistakes?
10. Did Jesus’ parents know He was special? (See Luke 2:19.)
11. How did adults respond to Jesus as a child? Would children have responded in similar ways?
12. The video maker shows Simeon and Anna having brief and private exchanges with Jesus. Is this how you picture these events? How might you design these scenes in the movie if you were the director?

Timeline of Events in Jesus Christ’s Childhood in the New Testament

- Birth + Shepherds Visit  |  Bethlehem
- Circumcision and Naming  |  Bethlehem (8 days)
- Presentation in the Temple  |  Jerusalem (40+ days)
- Visit from Magi  |  Bethlehem (40 days to 2 years)
- Flight  |  Egypt (escape from Herod, who ruled 6-4 BC; replaced by his son in 4 BC)
- Return to Nazareth (2-4 years)
- Visit to temple  |  Jerusalem (12 years)
- Return to Nazareth (12 years)