

The Lost Christ

Introduction. It is interesting that Luke 2:39-52 is the only record we have of the Lord's childhood. The main point of this passage is Christ's identification that showed He was the Son of God in a unique way. However, there is another very important lesson of a practical benefit in this account.

The word "lost" creates anxiety in everyone who has experienced the loss of something prized. And when something is lost, we want it back! The Bible relates these types of experiences in Luke 15: a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In each of these cases there was great rejoicing when what was lost was found.

As we study the narrative of the lost Christ and then examine a present-day parallel, I want you to keep in mind the struggle to find what was lost and the joy expressed when it was found.

I. The Past Situation

- A. The Lord was lost by his mother, not because she failed to love Him, appreciate Him, or be interested in Him. She lost Him because she thought He was in the company returning to Galilee.
 - 1. Adult Jews were supposed to attend three major feasts in Jerusalem annually (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles).
 - 2. For many this was impossible, but an effort was made to go at least to Passover each year.
- B. When Mary and Joseph had finished the appointed number of days, they started back toward Galilee. It may seem very remarkable that His parents were not more attentive to their only son, but the difficulties can be readily explained:
 - 1. Family members and neighbors would often journey together, resulting in a very large crowd. Jesus might have been with the women and children or with the men and boys. Each parent might have thought He was with the other.
 - 2. It is not improbable that Jesus was with them when they were making preparations to leave. Seeing Him then, they were secure as to His presence.
 - 3. A portion of the company might have left before the others and Joseph and Mary may have thought He was with them until they overtook the group at night and discovered His disappearance.
- C. After a day's travel, they discovered He was missing. After a search of the relatives and acquaintances, she then traveled back to Jerusalem, where on the third day they began their search for Jesus. As the account continues, they found the Lord sitting among the teachers, listening and asking them questions.

II. The Present Situation

- A. In applying our story to the present situation, the religious world today is in the same situation as Joseph and Mary. They are walking along the same path, taking everything for granted and basing their eternal hopes on supposition. Who would dare do that in earthly matters?
- B. Do you think there is a religious group anywhere who does not believe that Christ is in their midst? Do you think they have really stopped to investigate? In the sixteenth century the world began to realize that Christ was not in the

Catholic Church. Martin Luther, Henry VIII, John Calvin, and others thought they could dig Him out of Catholicism, but He was not there. In fact, denominationalism only continued to push Christ out of the picture.

- C. Men eventually rose above the clouds of Catholicism and denominationalism and cut loose from these inadequate religions. They then turned back to Jerusalem where Christ was left. And this fact should always be kept in mind: Jesus' parents left Him; He did not leave them (cp. 2 Chronicles 15:1-2).
- D. The Bible gives us the all-sufficient pattern for the church which includes:
 - 1. Work — the church works in the areas of edification (Ephesians 4:11-16), evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:3-8), and benevolence (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:12-15, 23; 9:13).
 - 2. Worship — worship on the first day of the week includes singing (Colossians 3:16), prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), teaching/preaching (Acts 2:41-42), partaking Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - 3. Organization — the church is overseen by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-6) and deacons (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-16) who are special servants to aid the work of the church.
 - 4. Doctrine — the church is to follow the commands of the New Testament (2 Peter 1:3). The church is not to follow any doctrine which originates from man. The use of creeds or other disciplines does not agree with the New Testament pattern (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- E. Now we do not have to go to Catholicism and denominationalism to find those who have lost the Christ. Churches of our Lord over the last several decades have started down a dangerous path. The work, worship, organization, and doctrine have fallen victim to implementations of human devising which do not agree with the teachings of Christ.
- F. This is more than a mere choice or opinion; this matter directly relates to salvation. Those who have lost the Christ do not possess eternal life, so we have to do all we can to teach those who have lost Him. Our sincere appeal is to go back to Jerusalem and embrace only those teachings found in the New Testament, and stop our religious affiliation with those who have lost the Christ (2 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:11).

Conclusion. If you and I get to Heaven, it will not be because we catered to the world. It will only be because we love the Lord enough and are unbiased and unprejudiced enough to cut loose from everything characteristic of humanity and simply follow the Lord. With Christ as our leader and the Bible as our guide, we practice and live the principles of the gospel.

I can only hope that all those who were in situations unauthorized by the Bible seek what is lost with the same earnestness as the mother of Jesus and those in Luke 15. Only in finding religion as expressed in the New Testament will we have adequate reason to rejoice (3 John 4).

We beg those who may be here to cut loose from what is human and return to the simple gospel plan of salvation, and desire that milk of the word that you may grow and be strengthened. The Lord will then consider you a faithful laborer in His vineyard, and the reward of eternal life will be yours.