

"ABOUT MY FATHER'S BUSINESS"

– *LUKE 2:40-52.* – *FEBRUARY 11.* –

"How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" – V. 49.

THE WONDERFUL BABE of Bethlehem "grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." The perfect child, the perfect boy, was of course far in advance of imperfect children. The schooling privileges of today were unknown. The education gleaned by the masses came to them chiefly through contact with their elders; history itself being handed down from generation to generation, except for the scholarly. Jewish boys, however, had an advantage over those of other nations because of the Divine regulation of the temple services and the services in the synagogues every Sabbath day. Those services consisted particularly of readings from the Law and the Prophets by course. Thus all Jewish children had excellent facilities for hearing the Word of the Lord. "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." Few had more opportunities than this – few were able to read; but Jesus was amongst those few – not because of schooling privileges in His youth, but because of His brilliant mind, which retained everything that came to it and to which, therefore, the Bible was continually an open book.

The surpassing abilities of Jesus are attested by the fact that when He entered the synagogue of His home city, Nazareth, His superiority as a reader and an exponent was so generally recognized that the service was usually turned over to Him. (Luke 4:16.) And yet the people marveled, saying, How comes it that Jesus is a man of letters, having never gone to school? And they all bore Him witness and wondered at the grace of His speech. (Luke 4:22.) The explanation of the matter is that Jesus was perfect while all about Him were imperfect.

Our lesson relates particularly to an incident which occurred when Jesus was twelve years old. His "parents" were strict religionists and obeyed the Mosaic Law by attending regularly the Feast of Passover at Jerusalem every year, and on this occasion Jesus was with them. The expression "parents" does not imply that Saint Luke supposed Joseph to be the father of Jesus any more than that Mary so considered the matter when (verse 48) she spoke of Joseph as being His "father." He was the foster father of Jesus – His foster parent, and Jesus was his foster child; the language is in exact harmony with what we would use under such circumstances today and is not a basis for any just criticism.

As might be surmised, the gathering of Jews from all parts of Palestine, yea, from the entire world, meant great crowds of people; on some occasions more than a million. Different families from different localities usually traveled together as one caravan. It was a Jewish custom that a Jewish boy should be considered "a son of the Law" when he had attained his twelfth year. He then became responsible under the Law and thenceforth was required to keep its festivals, etc. [R4957 : page 31]

JESUS A GREAT STUDENT

At the time in question Jesus had attained His twelfth birthday. He well knew of His peculiar birth and of the great prophecies which centered in Him, related by Gabriel to His mother, and was on the alert to fulfil His mission – to do the will of the Heavenly Father. He surmised that since at twelve years of age Jewish boys came under the requirements of the Law Covenant, this arrangement might possibly have been made as an indication of His proper course and duty – that that was the time at which He should begin His ministry.

Therefore He resolved to consult the very highest authorities respecting the teachings of the Law upon this subject. From time to time He sought intercourse with the learned Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors. He wished to make no mistake; He was therefore not satisfied with simply their opinion, but desired references to the Law and to the

Prophets that He Himself might judge and not rely too implicitly upon the conclusions of others. During a considerable part of the time of the Passover Feast the great men of His nation were engaged in public functions, and hence His best opportunity for conference with them was at the close of the feast, and then as He could gain their attention – coming time and again with new questions, with fresh inquiries about other types and symbols and their proper meaning.

When the time came for the return journey He had not finished His investigations of the Scripture teachings on this point. His parents, thinking that He was in the company with some of their relatives, went a day's journey homeward before they ascertained that He was not in the company. Then they returned, journeying another day, and the third day they found Him in the temple with the learned men discussing the question which to Him was the all-important one of the hour – the time at which public ministry might be begun, according to the Law. Evidently He had just finished His quest and found as His satisfactory answer that, although a boy at twelve became amenable to the Law, none could enter upon a teaching or preaching service until thirty years of age. This matter had evidently been settled just prior to the arrival of His parents.

Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, said nothing, allowing his wife, Mary, to chide Jesus with having been negligent of His duty toward them – causing them trouble, grief, annoyance by not coming promptly with them on the return journey. The words of Jesus may be paraphrased thus: Did you not know that I was twelve years of age; was it not your understanding that I had reached the time when I must become a son of the Law? Did you not know that this might mean to me some great responsibility in connection with my service of the Heavenly **[R4958 : page 31]** Father? Did you not forewarn me that such responsibilities were to be looked for by myself and that I must be diligent to accomplish my mission? Why, then, may I ask, should you be surprised and disappointed in finding that I had tarried behind you? Did it not occur to you that as a son of the Law I might have

responsibilities at this time and that I must use every opportunity to be about my Father's business – to do whatever work I should find He has appointed for me? But now I will give you no further trouble. I have ascertained through study and conference with the Doctors of the Law that there is nothing that I can do as a minor in the way of beginning the Father's service. I am therefore ready to return with you to our home, and I assure you that I shall be as loyal and obedient to you as heretofore and that my apparent neglect of your wishes in the present instance was merely because I supposed that you knew that I would be looking out for my Heavenly Father's business and my privileges in connection with it, and that you would therefore not be necessarily expecting me to return home at this time.

JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM

In the last verse of our study we read: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." It was not a boy who was to be the Redeemer, even as it was not a boy who had sinned. Jesus, therefore, to be a corresponding price for Father Adam and the race which lost life in Him, needed first to be developed into manhood.

The verse under consideration covers the period from His twelfth year to His thirtieth. For eighteen years He kept growing in wisdom and in grace of character. He did not grow in the Father's favor in the sense of becoming less sinful and more righteous, but in the sense of becoming more developed – reaching human perfection. Just so a piece of fruit in growing may be as perfect of its kind at the beginning as at the end, but it grows in size and in richness of flavor, and therefore in the appreciation of the owner.

So it was with Jesus. The perfect babe became the perfect boy; the perfect boy became the perfect youth; the perfect youth became the perfect man, and at thirty years of age was ripe and ready to be offered as an acceptable sacrifice of sweet savor to God, on behalf of mankind – "the Just for the unjust."

