

Christmas 2 / January 3, 2021

Luke 2:40;52

“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favour of God was upon Him...And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.”

The life of devout Jews in Judea and Galilee was rooted in the scriptures and centered on the temple. Three times each year the faithful in Israel would come from the north and the south and worship in Jerusalem. There were three great feasts: The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the feast of Harvest (Pentecost) fifty days after Passover and the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year. In Deuteronomy the Lord commanded Moses, “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose.” The place was Jerusalem, in the temple the Lord commanded King Solomon to build, as a place of worship and sacrifice for Israel and as a house of prayer for all nations.

Jesus’ parents were devout Jews and doubtless they made the three pilgrimages each year. Luke continues the story of Jesus’ birth, when He was twelve years old, saying His parents took Him to Jerusalem to the Passover. It is likely that they took Him on previous occasions as well, but the age of twelve is significant in that it is the age in which Jewish boys became adult members of the synagogue and had their bar mitzvah. Jesus had come of age and was now an adult member of the covenant community. As an adult male He was obligated by law to attend the three major feasts, the highest of which was the Passover, through which God redeemed Israel from the plague of death by the blood of the lamb.

Luke concluded the infancy narrative with Jesus’ presentation in the temple. He resumes twelve years later, with Jesus accompanying His parents to the temple for the Passover. Luke wasn’t giving a chronology of Jesus’ life. He wasn’t writing to give us a glimpse of Jesus’ childhood, so we would have an idea of what kind of a child He was. He was making a theological statement about who Jesus is as God’s Son and what He came to accomplish as a human being. Jesus was born under the law to redeem those who are under the law, so that through Him we would receive adoption as sons and an inheritance of eternal life in Him. Jesus increased in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and humans, so that through the sacrifice of His perfect life, He would lift the sentence of the law and the condemnation of death, from heads of those who would believe in His name. He would be the true and greatest Passover Lamb!

It’s interesting to wonder and speculate what Jesus was like as a child. On the one hand, He was the Son of God from eternity, conceived by the Holy Spirit as a perfect human being; sinless in thought, word and deed. At the age of twelve He knew God was His Father, the temple was His house and that’s where He needed to be. On the other hand, when Mary and Joseph realized He was not in their company travelling home, they searched three days before checking the temple. When He began His public ministry the people of Nazareth where He had lived throughout childhood and into adulthood, dismissed His Messianic claims asking derisively, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And are not His brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all His sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” The gospels tell us that early in His ministry, His brothers did not believe He was the Christ. At one point they came with His mother to take Him away, because they thought He was out of His mind.

So, what kind of a child was Jesus? Those incidents say more about the people themselves and what they were like, than they do about Jesus. We know that He didn’t talk back, even when He was wrongfully accused. Did you talk back and defend yourself, when your parents accused you of something you didn’t do. Did you try to argue your way out of something you did do? Mary and Joseph left Jesus behind in the temple, doubtless assuming He was in the other’s company or with the other boys of their group. It was an innocent mistake, but it was their mistake! Jesus did nothing wrong. He simply stayed where they had left Him. The first rule of being lost is, ‘stay where you are and don’t make things worse by wandering further away.’ When His mother demanded, “Son why have you treated us like this?” He simply stated the facts, “Didn’t you know I must be in my Father’s house?” Then He buttoned His lips and as Luke says, He “was submissive to them.” He knew these two things, “You shall honour your father and your mother.” And “You shall love the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”

What didn't Jesus know? It's natural for us to think of Jesus according to His divine nature and assume there was nothing He did not know. But even as an adult, aware of and accepting of His cross, Jesus claimed not to know the day of His return and the renewal of all things. When asked when these things would come to pass, He replied, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." We have to remember that although He remained the Eternal Son of God, Jesus emptied Himself of His glory and truly became a human being. He was capable of growing physically in stature, intellectually in knowledge and spiritually in favour with God. Yet even as a child He could say with the psalmist, "You are He who took me from my mother's womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God." He knew what was most important that God was His Father.

Where did Jesus get His knowledge about God? Certainly, according to His divinity Jesus knew all things. In the letter to the Colossians St. Paul writes, "In Him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell." However again, Jesus as a human being had the intellectual capacity that was appropriate to His age. He acquired knowledge as all of us do, people taught Him. He learned about God as we all do, through instruction in the sacred scriptures, which are the word of God. His mother and father taught Him the faith, even as Timothy was taught the word by his mother and grandmother. Jesus was born into a devout Jewish family. He would have attended the synagogue every Sabbath and heard the word read and explained by His Rabbis. He was versed in the word from childhood and gifted by the Spirit with such understanding that at the age of twelve, He held His own with the most revered teachers in the temple; asking questions and giving answers. In Jesus, the prayer of the psalmist received its fullest answer, "Give me understanding according to your word."

God gives understanding through His word. He gave Jesus understanding through the word, so that at the age of thirty He began to preach saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel." He gave Jesus power to withstand temptation in the wilderness, by the word and through the working of the Holy Spirit. When He was in the wilderness, fasting and being tempted by Satan, Jesus fended off every thrust of the devil with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. When the devil offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if He would worship him, Jesus knew exactly what to say. He said, "Be gone Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'"

At the age of twelve Jesus knew the temple was His Father's house, by the age of thirty-three He knew that His body was the truest temple of God and that in His body, He would offer the perfect sacrifice that would lift the sentence of eternal death from the human soul. He said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again." He knew through God's Holy Word that He "had not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." He knew through the words of Isaiah that He was the servant, who would bear the sin of many and make intercession for the transgressors. Through the same word we know that He is our Saviour and Lord and that in Him we have peace with God through the forgiveness of sin!

He was made like us in every way, except for sin. He was a perfect human being; sinless in thought, word and deed. Even as He grew in wisdom and knowledge through worship, hearing and being instructed in God's holy word, so we grow in faith and attain spiritual maturity and certainty in the same ways; through worship, hearing and being instructed in God's holy word. It is worthy of note that before Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus that "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Then when He appeared to the apostles, "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," to know that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer for our sins and rise for our salvation.

God revealed Himself to Jesus of Nazareth through the Scriptures taught by Mary, Joseph and His synagogue teachers. Through the word and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, He came to believe God was His Father, to know that He was His Son begotten from eternity and to understand that He had come to be the promised Saviour of Israel and all nations. God reveals Himself to us in the same Scriptures, so that through worship and instruction we would believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ who died for our sins and receive Him into our hearts as our Lord and Saviour. He reveals Himself to us in the scriptures so that we too would grow in wisdom, knowledge and the grace of God, until we join Him in His resurrection to life everlasting. God continue to bless us with His grace and favour in Christ our Saviour. Amen