

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XV. The Evidence Of Christ's Incarnation In His Childhood
(Luke 2:41-52 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. The incarnation of Christ as God-come-in-the-flesh of humanity is an astounding mystery, but evidence of this "hypostatic union" occurred even in the childhood of our God Incarnate Savior.
- B. We view Luke 2:41-52 among other passages on this subject for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. The Evidence Of Christ's Incarnation In His Childhood, Luke 2:41-52 et al.

- A. To understand the Biblical account of Jesus' visit to the Jerusalem temple when He was 12 years old, we must consider the practices that were involved at the time to prepare Hebrew boys for their "Bar Mizvah" at age 13:
 - 1. In Jesus' day, a Hebrew boy entered into full religious obligations and privileges at age 13 by his coming-of-age "Bar Mizvah." (Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Life in the Days of Christ, 1974, p. 120)
 - 2. For a year or two before that, the boys were "brought to the temple . . . to observe the festive rites," Ibid.
 - 3. During "the Sabbaths and feast-days on 'the terrace of the Temple,'" it was "the practice of the members of the various Sanhedrims" there "publicly to teach and expound, the utmost liberty being given of asking questions, discussing, objecting, and otherwise taking intelligent part in these lectures," Ibid.
 - 4. During Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread that followed, "these discussions would . . . be carried on . . . between the second and the last day of the Paschal week. Joseph and Mary, on the other hand, had, as allowed by the law, returned towards Nazareth on the third day of the Paschal week, while Jesus remained behind. These circumstances also explain why His appearance in the midst of the doctors, although very remarkable considering His age, did not at once command universal attention," Ibid.
 - 5. Thus, for the twelve-year-old Jesus Who aligned with the practices of His era to enter into extensive discussions about the Law in preparation for His Bar Mizvah the next year so as to remain in the temple for all the days of the teaching of the members of the Sanhedrin there was not an irresponsible or sinful act on His part. His interest in the things of God even at age 12 thoroughly occupied His mind and heart!
- B. When Joseph and Mary then took Jesus with them to Jerusalem at Passover in His twelfth year, Jesus' earthly parents fulfilled their required two days at Jerusalem and started back to Nazareth the third day as allowed by law while Jesus stayed behind for all the Sanhedrin lectures in the Days of Unleavened Bread, v. 41-43a.
- C. Families often travelled long distances in large groups for protection, and children would thus mix within the group so that the parents might not see them until they stopped at the end of each day's journey, so Joseph and Mary did not discover that Jesus had not been in the group until the first day's travel was ended, Lk. 2:43b-44.
- D. Thus, an anxious Joseph and Mary spent the second day returning to Jerusalem, and after spending the night there, they found Jesus in the temple the third day on the terrace of the temple where the lectures occurred and sitting in the midst of the doctors of the Law both hearing them and asking them questions, Luke 2:45-46.
- E. All who heard 12-year-old Jesus speak in His lowly Nazareth brogue (Matthew 27:71-73) were "astonishing themselves" (*existanto*, **imperfect middle** of *existemi*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 211; Wm. D. Mounce, The Analyt. Lex. to the Grk. N. T., 1993, p. 195) at His "understanding" (*sunesis*, G. Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 428) and "answers" (*apokrisis*, Ibid., p. 51), Luke 2:47!
- F. Seeing Jesus in this setting "shocked" (*ekplesso*, Ibid., G. Abbott-Smith, p. 141) His parents, and Mary told Him that she thought Jesus had mistreated her and Joseph who had been seeking Him with grief, Luke 2:48.
- G. Jesus thus asked why they had sought Him, for they should have known that He had to be about His Father's business, Luke 2:49. Jesus was aware at age 12 that He was God's Son, what signaled the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 49:1 that God the Father would instruct His Son and the Messiah from His infancy!
- H. Joseph and Mary did not understand Jesus' words, but He submitted to them, returning with them to Nazareth, Luke 2:50-51a. However, Mary "carefully kept" (*diatereo*, Ibid., p. 112) Jesus' words in her heart, v. 51b.
- I. Back in Nazareth, Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, Luke 2:52.

Lesson: *Christ's righteous conformity to the practices of His era, His great interest in Scripture, His supernatural insight of Scripture in spite of His lowly Nazareth brogue and upbringing that amazed even Israel's top teachers of the Law, His awareness of His identity as God's Son and yet His upright submission to His parents at age 12 all demonstrate that He was the righteous God Incarnate even in His human childhood.*

Application: *May we rejoice to know that even in human childhood, Jesus evidenced that He was God Incarnate.*