

The Visit to Jerusalem – Luke chapter 2, verses 41 – 52:-

The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke would appear to be based on the memories of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This ‘*orderly account*’ by the author, Luke, uses the memories of eyewitnesses.

(see Luke chapter 1, verses 1 – 4). Mary was an active member of the group of disciples in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost and would be a reliable witness to these events which would be important her personally. (see Luke chapter 2, verse 51).

Verses 41 – 42:- Devout Jews customarily attended the Passover at Jerusalem whenever possible. Even today the toast at the end of the Passover meal is “next year in Jerusalem”! Jesus being 12 years old was approaching the normal age of ‘bar mitzva’, a ‘son of the law’ which would make him a full member of the religious community.

Verses 43 – 45:- The Holy Family would have travelled in a larger group along with their relatives and neighbours. Safety in numbers would be necessary as a precaution against robbers especially for poorer people who could not afford an escort. At the end of the day they would have expected Jesus to come back to eat and sleep with them. The distress of Mary and Joseph is felt by any parent whose child goes missing – even if only for a short time.

Verses 46 -47:- Three days is a long time for a 12 year old to be missing! That they found him among the adults sat listening and questioning the teaching rabbis was obviously the last place they looked! As a child he, like all Jewish children, would have been brought up knowing the Old Testament scriptures. His mother would remember the details How the child had a deep interest in the faith and background of his people. This knowledge of the customs and manner of debate was needed by the Lord Jesus for his future ministry.

Verses 48 – 50:- The heartfelt cry of Mary - “*Child, why have you acted like this to us? Your father and I were seeking you in anguish and grief.*” The reply points to a ‘Heavenly Father’ as opposed to an earthly one. As a child the Lord Jesus needed the care and support of Joseph, Mary and a wider family life. His earthly parents did not understand the full meaning of what the child Jesus was saying about his relationship to God the Father.

Verses 51 - 52:- Reading ahead to Luke chapter 3, verse 23 we find that there are some 18 years in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ of which we have no record. Here we read that he went back home with them to Nazareth and as any child “*was obedient to them*”. Mary, as other mothers do, “*preserved all these things in her heart (mind)*”.

Verse 52 echoes the comment on the childhood and growth of Samuel (see 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 26). Can we say that during these hidden years the Lord Jesus was growing in human knowledge (“*wisdom*”) and in his understanding of his relationship to his heavenly Father within the Trinity?

1) *The Heavenly Child In Stature Grows,
And, Growing, Learns To Die;
And Still His Early Training Shows
His Coming Agony.*

2) *The Son Of God His Glory Hides
With Parents Mean And Poor;
And He, Who Made The Heavens, Abides
In Dwelling-Place Obscure.*

3) *Those Mighty Hands That Rule The Sky
No Earthly Toil Refuse;
The Maker Of The Stars On High
A Humble Trade Pursues.*

4) *He, Whom The Choirs Of Angels Praise,
Bearing Each Dread Decree,
His Earthly Parents Now Obeys
In Deep Humility.*

5) *For This Thy Lowliness Revealed,
Jesus, We Thee Adore;
And Praise To God The Father Yield
And Spirit Evermore.*

Author: Jean-Baptiste de Santeuil, 1630-1697; translated by John Chandler, 1806-1876