



*41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. 43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. 48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49 And he said unto them, **How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?** 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. (Luke 2:41-51)*

Just as Jesus came as a baby first to Bethlehem, and will come as a victorious King at His second Advent; so He comes as a young boy to the Temple at first visit, and as an avenging Lord at His latter visit at which time He drove out the money-changers and those who made commerce of the Lord's House. It might be observed that the Lord's House is still being desecrated by those who would get filthy lucre from the modern church. Only last year, we visited a church in Kenya whose service included a retail auction at conclusion of services. How many of us have been invited to send in a donation in order to receive a blessing for which the TV evangelist will pray if the green appears? This is a disgrace and a dark blotch on the escutcheon of the Church!

But the coming of Jesus to the Temple as a twelve year-old boy occurred without the approbation on man, but was His divine instinct whereby He felt the need to not only visit the temple, but to tarry there with the doctors and lawyers of the Temple. He already was aware of His purpose in coming and was eager to begin His labors. But the same divine wisdom that motivated the young Jesus was the same which curtailed His

further ministry for another eighteen years. He was needed at home to answer the responsibilities of a loving son for His mother, Mary, and His stepfather, Joseph.

Now let us observe some salient points revealed in today's Gospel. ⁴¹ *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.* This was a spiritual duty, and the mother of Jesus, and Joseph, were good examples of a Christian home. They attended the religious services faithfully of their religion. While many today cannot muster energy to travel two blocks to church on the Lord's Day, these traveled over harsh terrain a three day's journey for the Passover. Little did Mary and Joseph realize that they carried the future and final Passover with them – *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* (1 Cor 5:7) Many years later, Mary and Jesus would make that same trip to Jerusalem at Passover, and Christ would be the Lamb to be sacrificed.

For these past several years, Mary and Joseph had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, and now Jesus was twelve years old – the age, presumed by religion, to be the age of moral consciousness. Jesus was more than morally conscious. He taught doctors in the Temple! We have, in this account, the only meager remnants of the young life of Jesus. ⁴² *And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.* Just as He would do some twenty-one years later, Jesus enters the Temple at Jerusalem and confronts the teachers of the Temple – this time as a Child, the last with a reed with which he beat the moneychangers and overturned their tables.

Since the annual Passover journey to Jerusalem was a Jewish national event, there were great numbers in the company of travelers from Nazareth – perhaps all of the village who were able to travel. ⁴³ *And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.* It is very easy to have Jesus in our hearts, so very close as a beloved Child, yet lose His constant fellowship through neglect of attention. ⁴⁴ *But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.* How do you suppose poor Mary felt? She had been entrusted with a Child that was ONLY hers and that of God the Father – and she has lost Him. She did not lose Him for a few minutes, or for a few hours, but THREE days! What do you suppose went through Mary's mind and heart? When we are separated from Christ owing to our own neglect to study and love Him, do we not suffer great sorrow? Mary had taken Jesus for granted. She believed He was among all of the other playful children on the journey, but she did not make CERTAIN! We must not take our fellowship with Christ for granted.

⁴⁵ *And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.* If we place too great a distance between our daily living and Christ, we may not so easily find Him again. Our lives, without Christ, become confused and disorderly and, though Christ is always accessible to us if we seek Him, the weeds may have grown over the trail of that access.

Though the Temple was the most likely place to find Jesus, it was perhaps the last place Joseph and Mary looked for they had been in Jerusalem some hours before they found Him. ⁴⁶ *And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.* Here is an important lesson regarding Christ and our prayers. He not only hears us, but also inquires. So, you want an opulent new home? "Why do you need such when your neighbor is living in a shanty?" Jesus may ask. It was completely contrary to reason that a twelve year old would be dialoguing with doctors of religion – listening to their highfalutin chatter, and then asking of them the meaning.

Jesus will astonish us with His remarkable solutions to our problems if we will only ask in humility. ⁴⁷ *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and*

answers. These were all lawyers and doctors of religion – teachers of the law; yet, they were astonished at the wisdom and understanding of a twelve year old Boy. Should we not be even more astonished at the Words and Wisdom of the Risen Lord? All that hear (many will refuse to hear) shall be astonished at Christ. Have you been astonished at His Words?

The human instincts of the mother in Mary overrode her understanding and memory of Gabriel's message. ⁴⁸ And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. Perhaps Mary's feeling of personal guilt at losing her Son caused her to shift the blame to Jesus. But Mary was no unaccustomed to suffering for the Child that she bore by Heaven's decree.

It has been argued by many errant theologians that Jesus had no sense of identity until His baptism, but this verse disqualifies such a supposition: ⁴⁹ And he said unto them, **How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?** Christ clearly reveals Himself here to be the Son of God!

How often we fail to grasp the higher meaning of the teachings of the Bible! Even though we have read, and seemingly understood, just a while later, the meaning escapes us. Mary had been told by the Angel of Christ and His Life, yet Mary has long suffered many diversions and forgotten, for the present, the whole meaning shared by Gabriel. ⁵⁰ And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. If we had a perfect understanding of all of the Words of Christ, how could we ever lose Him. We read the Scriptures through a lens of deception too often. We read and interpret the words of the Bible in such a way as to justify our own selfish notions. How often do ministers and theologians propose and theological doctrine, and then limit their reading only to those parts of Scripture that seem to justify that doctrine?

Jesus was an obedient Son. He knew His mother and Joseph did not understand fully what He was about, so He tarried for the perfect timing of His Father to continue His ministry. ⁵¹ And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. But Mary mulled over these events in her mind. Perhaps she began to recall the Words of Gabriel and compared them to her experiences with Jesus at Jerusalem and as He was growing up in Nazareth. Perhaps she even wondered about the sword that would pierce her own heart, but not fully knowing. We see now, as Paul says, through a glass darkly, but one day we shall see face-to-face!

⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. There is one thing God may have not known before Jesus became man – that is, how does it FEEL to be human? Though He knows our hearts well, God had never experienced physical pain, want, hunger, and thirst. But Jesus experienced all of the emotions and sensations of pain and patience we have experienced while in the flesh. He grew in wisdom, for wisdom cannot remain idle. The favor of the Father was showered upon His Son more and more as the years passed and the day of His Passion approached. It was undoubtedly a time of great joy for the Father in seeing His Son fulfill the measure of love, grace, obedience and trials of life; but it must have also been and agonizing period for the Father in anticipating the great abuse and torture that His Son would undergo at the moment of that Passion. The thought of all that Christ suffered for us should be a constant source of grief mingled with joy - grief to know that He did all for us, and joy to know that His sacrifice was sufficient even for our own sins.

Could we withstand the grief and heartache of Mary, of John?

We shall see.