

## **The Amazing Child Who Was God, Part 2**

Luke 2:47-52

42-33

Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke chapter 2. We are looking at the last section of chapter 2 verses 39 to 52, under the title, "The Child Who Was God."

Just by way of a brief introduction, the central person throughout the New Testament is Jesus Christ. He is presented as the Savior, the King, the Lord. He is God, the Son, who became a man to live a perfect, sinless life, then to die as a substitute for sinners, paying fully the debt for sin and rising from the dead. The New Testament tells us that He ascended into heaven where He now lives, interceding for His own and someday shall return to establish His Kingdom on earth.

The great story of salvation, the great drama of redemption is unfolded throughout the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament. It is the New Testament that tells us how it is that God saves sinners from eternal hell. And that salvation is clearly through the work of Jesus Christ. And the Bible is clear there is no salvation apart from Christ, apart from faith in His person and in His work. So it is Jesus Christ who is the theme of Scripture and certainly the theme of the New Testament.

Because that is true and because there is no salvation in any other than Jesus Christ, the New Testament begins with four gospels, four historical accounts of the life of Jesus, focusing on who He is and what He did. It is because that that great reality is at the heart of salvation. If you are to be saved from your sin, if you are to escape hell and enter heaven forever, it will be because you believe in Jesus Christ, you believe Him to be who He is and to have done what the Scripture says He did. Therefore all the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, focus on the identity of Jesus and His mission, His work. They present Him as God, the Son, the Savior of the world, the divine Messiah, the Lord. Detail after detail unfolds to solidify beyond any question the reality of His person and His work.

Now we have been for months in Luke chapter 1 and chapter 2, long chapters even by biblical standards. Eighty verses in chapter 1, fifty-two verses in chapter 2. And all of this material has been designed to make very clear, unarguably clear, who Jesus Christ really is. We have heard it from all kinds of witnesses. The prophets of the Old Testament said who He would be. Zacharias, the Old Testament priest, and his wife, Elizabeth, affirmed the identity of the Messiah whose forerunner would be their son, John. The angel Gabriel identified who Jesus would be, Immanuel, God with us, Jesus the Savior. The angels in the field talking to the shepherds identified who He would be. Joseph and Mary knew who He was and give testimony. And the old people in the temple, Simeon and Anna; their testimony is added to all the rest.

So, Luke has made sure that the reader understands that Jesus is Savior of the world, is Messiah, Lord, Christ, Son of David, King over an eternal kingdom, God in human flesh. Testimony by angels, testimony by His parents, testimony by a godly Old Testament priest, testimony by two godly people,

Simeon and Anna all brought together to affirm the identity of Jesus.

But Luke isn't finished. There's one other testimony that is critical, and that is the testimony of Jesus Himself. And that is the focus of the section to which we look again this morning.

There have been critics through the years that have said that Jesus was just a man and at the age of thirty He began to realize the fever pitch of messianic expectation. He could see that the pressure was on to...to lead a new movement in an apostate kind of religion under a beleaguered people who had been trampled on by Greeks and Romans for literally centuries. And He was pressed into acting the role of a Messiah for the sake of what turned about to be an ill-conceived attempt at revolution. There are others who say that Jesus was simply a human being but around the age of thirty the Spirit of God came upon Him and transformed Him into the living *logos*, the Living Word. All of these, of course, are a misrepresentation of the fact. The fact is that from His conception on He was God in human flesh.

At the age of twelve, as this particular passage points out, He was fully aware of exactly who He was and why He had been sent into the world. At the age of twelve He had been living in obscurity in Nazareth. He had no public persona whatsoever. There was no pressure on Him to play any kind of role. He still had another eighteen years of subjection in anonymity under His parents in that obscure place called Nazareth. There was no therefore external pressure to make Him become something He otherwise was not. When He declared Himself in this passage in verse 49 to be the Son of God, He did it not because of any external pressure but because He knew full well by that age exactly who He was. So added to the testimony of men and angels is the testimony of the God-Man Himself. And this of all testimonies is most penetrating and most dramatic.

We meet then in verses 39 to 52 the child who was God, who knew He was God, and knew why He came and knew where He belonged and under whose authority He was to live and fulfill His life mission. And by the way, as I mentioned last time, in this passage we have the only recorded incident in the first thirty years of Jesus' life. From birth to thirty, when He embarked upon His public preaching ministry, we know nothing by way of biblical record except this one incident. That's all we know. Now if God picked out of thirty years one incident and one brief statement of Jesus, that is the only recorded statement of Jesus in thirty years, if God picked one incident and one statement, you can be sure it is of monumental consequence, and indeed it proves to be so.

The statement focuses on the fact that He knew exactly who He was and why He had come. It is true that verses 40 to 52 do span all those thirty years. From birth to twelve is covered in verse 40, "The child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him." Just a general statement.

From age twelve to thirty is covered in verse 52, "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor of God and men." Another general statement.

So verse 40, birth to twelve. Verse 52, twelve to thirty; and in the middle is this one incident in verses 41 to 51 which gives us the only glimpse of Jesus and the only words of Jesus that we need during three decades of the incarnate God living in this world. It's all we know and it's all we need to know.

Let's look, first of all, by way of review, at the childhood years we discussed last time in verse 40.

The child from birth to the age of twelve when this incident occurred in verse 41, continued to grow. That refers to physical development, physical growth, and became strong, and that is modified by the participial phrase "increasing," or "being filled with wisdom," and that refers to the spiritual development.

What you have here then is simply a statement that over twelve years Jesus grew physically and He grew spiritually to the place where He was filled with divine wisdom. We covered that last time. I'm not going to go over it in detail except to review. He had reached the age of twelve. It tells us that in verse 42. And at the age of twelve He was on the brink of adulthood. The Jews considered the age of thirteen the age when you became a son of the law or a son of the commandment and you stepped out from under the shelter of your parents and you became an equal to your father. That is you were equal under the law of God. You went from being a boy to being a son at the age of thirteen.

It was on the edge of manhood then, at the age of twelve, that the mind had developed...the capacity of the mind had developed to understand and discern the truth of God and be accountable to obey it. And so, by the time Jesus reached twelve, verse 40 says, He was filled with wisdom. His human mind had developed to the point where it could contain the mind of God. That is a really monumental thought. His human mind had grown to contain the mind of God. He had developed to a full understanding of divine wisdom. As God, He knew what God knows. And then it says also in verse 40, "The grace of God...or the favor of God...was upon Him," and that's because He was perfect, He was sinless, so He received the favor of God resting on Him as God's Son in whom He was well pleased. He progressed from perfect innocence to perfect knowledge and perfect holiness. He was tempted in all points, the temptations of an infant, the temptations of a young child, the temptations of an older child, yet without sin.

Now that brings us to the incident at the age of twelve. As I said, the only recorded incident in the first thirty years of His life, the only recorded words He is said to have spoken. It is a monumental moment, it is the moment when He has developed humanly to the place where He fully understands the mind of God, He knows who He is and He knows why He has come. And He is here to reveal that. This is Luke's affirming testimony of His identity. It is also the moment in which He identifies Himself not only for all of us, but for Joseph and Mary who needed so much to understand who really was in charge of His life.

This revelation comes in a fascinating narrative. Let's look again at verse 41. "And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve they went up there according to the custom of the feast. And as they were returning after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem and His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan and went a day's journey, and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances and when they didn't find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him."

Now just a few brief comments. Verse 42 indicates that He was twelve. And again, in Jewish tradition because at the age of thirteen you were a man, you were accountable, you had reached the point where you had developed physically and mentally to grasp the law of God and to be held to obedience to it. It was traditional because at the age of thirteen you made that transition which later became called bar mitzvah and a ceremony was developed. It was traditional that at the age of twelve and some Jewish writings say at the age of eleven and maybe even earlier, that the son was

taken to the Passover so that that child at that point on the brink of accountability and responsibility would get a full and rich exposure to all of the implications of the law of God that were played out in that wonderful event called Passover which occurred on a Sabbath and then was followed by a seven-day feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So here is Jesus really on the brink of adulthood, in the last year that could be identified as childhood, fully conscience of His identity, fully conscious of His mission, taken by His parents to Jerusalem for the Passover that He might be exposed to the full richness of that, that He might fully understand to what He would be accountable very soon. So He goes with His parents to Jerusalem. And as I tried to paint the picture for you last time, He watched the sacrificial lamb be slaughtered for His family to take and eat, and must have fully known in His own mind the imagery there was an image that pictured His own death as the Lamb of God. There were as many as a quarter of a million animals slaughtered in that period of time in Jerusalem. The blood bath that was going on there must have been more vivid than we could ever imagine as Jesus was exposed to all of the slaughter and the butchery that was going on and the blood-letting which all pictured Him, the Lamb of God, who alone could take away the sins of the world. He knew that He was come to seek and to save that which was lost. He knew He was a grain of wheat that would fall into the ground and die. He knew that it was written that the Son of Man had to be lifted up to draw all men to Himself. He knew that He had to die and three days later rise again. He knew He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. The vividness of that captivated His mind, surely, in ways that are too far beyond our imagination to understand.

He also knew that His Father was the one in charge of His life. He also knew that He belonged with the people of God in the temple of God, the place of God. All of this had come onto His mind as He reached this point in His development where, as I said it in a summary, His human mind had reached the point of maturity where it could grasp the mind of God. So they take Him there. Time for leaving in verse 43 and they go back eighty miles, three to four days, depending on whether they went twenty or twenty-five miles a day. They spent the full number of days there. They were devout. Most Jews spent two days, they spent eight. And then the boy Jesus had been exposed to it all.

When His parents started back, it says in verse 43, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were not aware of it. And I told you they were traveling, as verse 44 indicates, in a large caravan, may well have been hundreds of people and typically the children would go out first so that they didn't wind up leaving them behind. They would sort of set the pace at whatever pace children could walk. They would be followed by the women and in the back would come the men. The assumption was, as we noted in verse 44, that Jesus was with relatives or acquaintances, maybe He was with the younger men, maybe Joseph thought He was up with the women, with Mary. Maybe Mary thought He was back with the older men. But they didn't think anything of it because Jesus always was exactly where He needed to be, exactly when He needed to be there. They had never known Him to do anything other than what was right and absolutely appropriate and absolutely expected by His parents. So they never gave it a thought until they gathered, according to verse 44, at night at the end of the first day's journey some twenty to twenty-five miles down the Jordan Valley from Jerusalem and realized He wasn't there and they started to look among relatives and acquaintances; didn't find Him.

They would have to have waited overnight until the dawn of the next day and then, verse 45, return to Jerusalem and then waited until the next day, because it's a full day journey back, and then began on that next day to look for Him. And that's why verse 46 says, "It came about that after three days,"

one day out, one day back, and one day looking, they finally found Him.

And where did they find Him? Of all places, they found Him in the temple. And even that could be challenging. I mean, there were hundreds of thousands of extra pilgrims in the city of Jerusalem, looking for a twelve-year-old boy among people who all dressed basically alike. There weren't any ways to pick someone out of a crowd. It would be a formidable task and even deciding to go and look at the temple area would be difficult. I've been on the temple ground when it's filled with masses of thousands of people. Even today it would be hard to find someone there. You can only imagine what it had been like in a time when pilgrims were literally jamming the place, to try to find one boy. And so it wound up being a search that probably took a greater part of that third day since it says "after three days."

They found Him in the...somewhere in the courtyards, the porticos, the porches, the bustling crowds that were in the temple area. And when they did find Him, they found Him, it says in verse 46, "Sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions."

They came upon a traditional typical scene, teachers seated. That's how they taught in ancient Israel. And seated in the middle of the teachers were the students, the pupils, Jesus being the pupil identified here, sitting in the midst of the teachers.

Now this maybe needs a little bit of discussion. We don't know who these teachers were. Luke is kind to them. He calls them teachers. *Didaskalos* is the word, and it's a word that he never uses to refer to Jewish teachers again. From now on when he identifies them, he'll identify them as *nomikos*, lawyers, or *grammateus*, scribes, but he never calls them teachers again. He reserves that word for John the Baptist and most particularly he reserves that word for Jesus. Once Jesus became the teacher, nobody else is called by Luke a teacher. But for now he gives them credit as teachers.

The Passover has just ended. Just after the Passover many people would linger, and most notably during the Passover, great teachers who were devout Jews would come from all over the dispersion. Jews had been scattered over the Roman world and even down into Africa. And they would come to the Passover so there would be a great coming together of...of teachers. This is an opportunity Jesus seized upon. It's an opportunity that never would be afforded Him in the out-of-the-way place called Nazareth where He lived, to be able to sit in the midst of the great Jewish teachers, those who are expert in the law, expert in the prophets, expert in the *hagiographa*, the holy writings the three sections of the Old Testament, the laws, the Pentateuch, the books of Moses. The prophets are the major and minor prophets in the holy writings, everything else law and history...or poetry and history. And he would not have been exposed to these great minds, great teachers of the Old Testament in His own hometown. And here He found His way into a gathering of these teachers. As I said, His mind had reached the point where it could think God's thoughts and He now began to understand the fullness of the mind of God, the truth of God and that would, of course, be His passion. That would, of course, be His delight. That would, of course, be His consummate interest and He would not have found anything like this opportunity in Nazareth. He would have wanted to know how they viewed the Old Testament. He would have wanted to know how they viewed the prophecies regarding Messiah, how they reviewed the sacrificial system, how they reviewed the law of God because it was all related to divine truth which consumed His mind.

So there He was. But His posture is not of a teacher, it's of a student and it says that. "He was sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." He was the listener.

He was the one hearing them. This is a favorite method, by the way, of Jewish teaching, this dialogue method. Frankly, I really love this kind of method and we've done it through the years here at Grace Church. The customary pattern for teaching in Judaism, and even by the apostle Paul, was for students to gather around the teachers and stimulate discussion by asking questions. This would engage the dialogue. Paul says that in Acts, "He reasoned with them out of the Scripture," *dialego*, a question-and-answer format stimulating instruction on the part of the expert, the teacher. And there was Jesus, not the teacher, but the stimulator. And by the way, this is the only time ever in the gospels that Jesus is the learner, the only time. He is the student here. He will never be the student again.

He has been growing, as verse 40 tells us. He has been growing in His physical ability to comprehend. He's reached the point where He understands the mind of God. He understands the wisdom of God. He has that wisdom. He's not asking for answers, I don't think, from these men but He's listening to how they understand the truth of God. He has a consuming desire for it. He has a hunger for discussing the truth of God, something that was all there ever was in pre-incarnate fellowship with God. In the presence of God when they were, of course, in that trinitarian glory before His condescension, He would fully have engaged in nothing but the wonders of divine truth. And now His heart reaches out for that again.

Someday He will also ask questions of teachers again. But He will ask them questions that only He can answer. And as you go through the gospel of Luke and as you go through the other gospels, you'll find other times when Jesus asks questions to the religious leaders, but He always asks questions that they can't answer and then He answers them Himself. And in so doing He uses this traditional methodology to literally cut through the hypocrisy and pierce to the heart of their apostate religious establishment. But He isn't going to do that for another eighteen years. That is an immense test of patience, wouldn't you imagine? Can you just imagine how many stupid conversations Jesus had to listen to over the next eighteen years? But He is here the young learner.

Verse 47, "And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers." He was stimulating questions, obviously. They weren't capable of giving answers, or at least they sought out His view on things, which is pretty remarkable when you think He's a twelve-year-old boy. They were amazed, it says. And by the way, that is a response that you're going to find all through the gospels and all through Luke. Wonder is associated with Christ. Back in chapter 2 verse 18, "All who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds." Back in verse 33, "His father and mother, Joseph and Mary, were amazed at the things that are being said about Him."

You're going to find that repeated throughout the gospel story. He creates wonder and astonishment and amazement, the kind of wonder created by the presence and power and wisdom of God.

But there is no conceit here. There's no pride here. There's no self-centeredness, self-promotion, there's no arrogance. He is a respectful boy. He is a humble learner. He is a questioner. His questions are so penetrating and so insightful and so powerful that they generate astonishment on the part of the great teachers who surround Him. His questions show deep wisdom. They show clarity. They show precision. And He gives answers that are staggering to the minds of these experts.

Again, remember He knew who He was and He knew why He had come. And the imagery of the Passover was very clear in His mind as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. And

He saw a people frenetically engaged in acts that were endeavoring to...to offer some atonement for the overwhelming burden of their sins. He could see the power of sin in the butchery that was taking place and in the guilt-ridden lives of the people. He could see the hypocrisy of Judaism, all of it laid out to His now fully aware and wisdom-filled mind. The questions must have dealt with those kinds of issues and they astonished these teachers.

Well, verse 48, His parents finally saw Him and they were astonished like the other people. Jesus astonished everybody all the time. But their astonishment was not so much because of the questions and dialogue that had been generated, but rather because of His location. Maybe they thought He would be standing somewhere saying, "Where's My mommy? I don't know where My parents are, I'm lost. Could you help Me?" But He seemed absolutely impervious to any human circumstance. He seemed absolutely lost, as it were, in the moment, without any regard or any concern for the whereabouts of His family and friends. Here He was three days later. Where had He stayed? Where had He eaten? Those things were not on His mind at all, apparently. He was concentratingly engaged in a dialogue about the Old Testament. It was amazing to His parents. And then very personally perturbed because for three days they have been without Him, His mother says to Him in verse 48, "Son, why have You treated us this way?"

She puts a guilt and makes an effort to put some guilt on Him as if He had intended this to be somehow inflicting anxiety on His parents if He had done this for the purpose of making them worry or fear. And by the way, this is the first time the sword pierces Mary's heart. You remember back in chapter 2, verse 35, Simeon had said that this child is going to put a sword through your heart, Mary. Well now it had been twelve years and there wasn't any sword. This child had been nothing but a joy. After escaping Herod, after escaping the slaughter, they had returned back from Egypt to Nazareth. They had lived there for these years. The child had been nothing but obedient, nothing but compliant, nothing but submissive, nothing but loving. And certainly Mary loved that...that Son like no other child and certainly that Son loved her like no one ever loved her. One can only imagine what it was like to have a perfect child, the sinless Son, God in human flesh with all the sensitivity and tenderness and kindness and mercy and grace that that child could bring to bear upon her life and Joseph's. There had never been a sword, but now there was a sword.

This was inexplicable and we can understand the reasonableness of her query because she had never seen Jesus behave like this. He had only done what would have been expected of Him every time, in every place, in every way. And so, she says, "Why have You treated us this way?" She's taking it very personally. Jesus never intended it to be personal. He wasn't treating her in any way, nor was He treating Joseph in any way. It's a normal motherly rebuke and she cranks it up a bit by saying, "Behold," which is an exclamation, "Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." Do you realize how much anxiety You have caused us?

At this point she assumes that He's been hiding from them and that He's inflicted this on them with some amount of will. But He hasn't been hiding from them. He hasn't been defying them. He hasn't been disobeying them. In fact, if you lost your child for a few days and you found him sitting in the church dialoguing with the theologians, you might conclude that he was in the best place, doing the best thing with the best people possible. But they're taking it personally because of the stress of three days. But Jesus didn't mean it in any way as disrespectful. And the whole scene was necessary because it was necessary to establish His identity. And it was necessary to make an inevitable break between Jesus and His earthly family because they were just very temporary. He had come to do the will of the Father, as He says over and over and over again, particularly in John's

gospel that is recorded. And though the break will not be implemented for eighteen years, it is announced here. We see that in verse 49.

"He said to them, 'Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?' That's the crux of this whole text. This is a profound, profound statement. The only words recorded of Jesus in thirty years and they tell us who He was and why He came. Very simple statement, 'Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?' In other words, you should have come here first. You know who My Father is and you know this is My true house. I don't really belong in your house in Nazareth. God is My true Father, I belong with His people in His house.

You say, "Well, what was their response?" Verse 50, "And they didn't understand the statement which He made to them." Now listen carefully. They didn't understand the statement which He had made to them. They knew who He was. They knew He was virgin conceived. They both knew that. They had been told that by God through an angel. They knew He was the Son of the Most High God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Gabriel had announced that very clearly. They knew He was the Messiah, the Son of David. They knew He was God in human flesh. They knew twelve years of perfection. They knew what kind of a child He was. And in those days they had a family business, Joseph was a carpenter and the family business would be right there adjacent to the home they lived in. Children weren't isolated from their parents; the whole family lived in one room. They were together twenty-four hours a day for all the twelve years. They intimately knew this child. They knew everything about this child. There were...there was no such thing as a private world in which Jesus existed. They knew exactly who He was and they could see it manifest in everything He said and did. Of course they knew who He was.

But they still didn't understand what He meant by what He said. It was profound enough to be beyond their grasp. You want to know something? It is profound. And so profound that some of us are still trying to figure out what He meant. And it's not unusual for this to happen. In the ninth chapter of Luke, for example, Jesus is speaking to the disciples and He says, "Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." That's what He says. "But they did not understand this statement," verse 45. There were a number of times when Jesus said something to the disciples and they didn't understand it. And it goes on to say, "It was concealed from them so that they couldn't perceive it" and they were even afraid to ask Him about the statement so they just stood there befuddled by it.

Well we understand that. I mean, there are things in the Bible that Jesus said that we're still trying to get our arms around. Now what He said in verse 49 wasn't clear to them. But what He was saying was, "You're very temporary, God is My true Father, and the home in Nazareth is very temporary, I belong in God's house with God's people."

This was the sword, the first sword to pierce Mary. But the time for implementing had not come, so in verse 51, "He went down with them." You always go down from where? Jerusalem. "And came to Nazareth and He continued in subjection to them" I might add, for eighteen more years." And again I say, how much ridiculous conversation did He listen to? What a...what a constant flow of temptation to be impatient must have existed in His life. But He continued for eighteen years to be subject willingly until He was thirty years old and began His ministry.

His relation to God, His true and eternal Father from which He was eternally generated, did not

preclude or nullify His duty as a human to His earthly parents. He would obey the fifth commandment, "To honor your father and mother." He was an obedient child all through His birth to twelve years and He would be an obedient adult, submit Himself to His parents from the age of twelve to the age of thirty.

The question is, why? What is... Why is it necessary? This is...this is something that is, to me, so profound and so staggering. I want to comment on it in just a moment.

They didn't understand the statement He made. But He lived in subjection to them. And Mary, it says, "Went on to treasure all these things in her heart." She had a lot to think about, a lot to think about. Back in chapter 2 verse 19 it says the same thing, when she heard from the shepherds she treasured up all these things pondering them in her heart. Mary had a lot to think about, a lot to think about. She had to realize that this Son was to be thought of as a Savior, that she had to exchange authority for submission. She had to exchange commanding for obeying. She had to exchange responsibility for redemption. She had to exchange wonder over the child for worship of the child.

In fact, a sword pierced her heart as recorded in Mark 3 when she came to find Jesus one time with some of her other children, brothers and sisters. And the crowd said, "Your mother is seeking You." And Jesus said, "Who is My mother? Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, the same is My brother, My sister, My mother." And He distanced Himself from that human relationship, not because He didn't love her, He loved her with a perfect love, but because she needed not to see Him as a Son to do what she wanted but as a Savior doing what the Father demanded. In fact, Luke only mentions Mary one more time. Just once more is Mary mentioned and that's in chapter 8 verses 19 to 21 where it refers to that very account that I just mentioned from Mark chapter 3.

Turn to Luke 11:27. Let me give you an interesting note. Luke 11:27. As you move further into the life of Christ, Luke 11:27, "It came about while He said these things one of the women in the crowd raised her voice." Jesus was...was teaching, answering accusations and some woman raised her voice and said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." Now that was a compliment. "Oh my," this lady says, "Your mother is to be blessed, what a Son You are, oh bless Your mother." It would have been a perfect opportunity for Jesus to say, "Hail, Mary," you know? Right? What did He say? "On the contrary," verse 28, "on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it." Whoa. Perfect opportunity to affirm the grand significance of Mary. He says, "She just goes right down where everybody else is and she's blessed if she's obedient to the Word of God." This is the distancing. This is what's happening here in this incident. This is what Mary kept in her heart and realized. This child was God's Son in the truest sense, not hers.

And then the adult years in verse 52; from the time of this incident when they went back to Nazareth until He began His ministry of preaching around the age of thirty, "Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men." He kept growing, *prokoptō*, to advance, to progress. He was first referred to in chapter 2 verse 16 as *brephos*, an infant; chapter 2 verse 40 as *paidion*, a little child; chapter 2 verse 43 as *pais*, a child; chapter 2 verse 52 He is Jesus, and the infant, and the child, and the boy, here Jesus. Here He is in His adult life, still growing stronger physically in stature, still getting a greater grasp of divine truth and growing in spiritual favor with God because of the continual triumph over temptation, because of the continual victory that He wins and growing also in favor with men because of the wondrous perfection of His life. He grew spiritually, physically, intellectually, and socially.

Now as we close, I want to bring this into focus, it's very important. When Jesus next appears on the stage age...eighteen years later, He will begin His ministry and He will become the teacher and He will make it clear that He is God's Son and He will move to die on the cross and rise again. But for all those years of His life, up to the year He began His ministry and through His ministry, for all the thirty-three years of His life, He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted as an infant the way infants are tempted, to be selfish, to be impatient. He was tempted the way children are tempted, to be selfish and impatient and to have trivial and superficial thoughts and to be disrespectful and so forth and so on. He was tempted the same way young people are tempted and the same way adults are tempted. And as I said, in eighteen years of knowing the answer to everything, He must have been tempted to be impatient with the stupidity around Him. He was tempted, Hebrews 4:15, in all points. At all points He was tempted the same way everybody as tempted...is tempted. In all the stages of life He was tempted, through every means that the enemy, the world, the flesh, the devil tempts, Jesus received those temptations yet was without sin. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. This is a critical point.

And you might of...you might ask the question, "Why does He have to live all these years?" And as I have said in some teaching recently, "You know, if I were God and I said, OK, I want You to go down and die for people. I don't want this thing to be drawn out. All I ask is that since their redemption depends on Your death and resurrection, could I have You for the weekend? Just go down on Friday, die. You'll be back Saturday night. The whole deal is over."

What's the thirty-three years of grief, hostility, animosity, persecution, patience, temptation? What's the point of that? And there's not even a record of it. What's the point?

The point is that He was living through an entire span of human life in perfection. Let me show you something. Hebrews 5:8 and 9, Hebrews 5:8 and 9, this is one of the great truths of Scripture, 5:8, He was a Son, He was Son, literally, you can take the "a" out of it. "Although He was Son, Son of God, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." It's not talking about His death; it's talking about His life. All through His life He is assaulted with temptation and temptation and temptation at every point as an infant, as a little child, as a boy, as a man, the whole of temptation is pushed on Him. And He...He knew obedience as God in His mind, He understood what obedience was, of course, in His mind, but He learned it experientially because of all the temptation that He suffered and over which He triumphed. He experienced obedience and every temptation that came He learned what obedience was like because He obeyed. And verse 9, "That is what made Him perfect and able to become to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation."

He had to live a perfect life to be the source of eternal salvation. You say, "Well I still don't understand that." Second Corinthians 5:21 says it this way, you know how I love this verse, "He made Him who knew no sin" Christ "sin for us in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Now you understand what it means "He made Him sin," that is to say He judged Him on the cross for our sin, not His own, He didn't have any. And the way I like to say it is, on the cross God treated Jesus as if He lived your life. That is a great truth. On the cross, God treated Jesus as if He lived my life. And God literally judged Jesus as if He were me. God punished Jesus for my sin. So I say on the cross God treated Jesus as if He lived my life. That's substitution.

But that's not where it ends. Now, listen to this one. He treats me as if I lived Jesus' life. Can you grasp that? There had to be a perfect life lived to be credited to your account. That's the other side of the great doctrine of substitution. That is just staggering to me. He was an infant, He was a little child, He was a boy, He was a man, He was tempted at all points all the way through all of that and He suffered all those temptations and suffered them to the max because He never caved in so He got the full blow of temptation. He never sinned. He therefore became perfect through that and His perfection qualifies Him to be the author of eternal salvation because it is that perfect life that it is...that is credited to your account. If you didn't have a perfect life credited to your account, you couldn't have eternal salvation. So He had to take your place on the cross and die as if He lived your life, and then He had to live a perfect life that could be credited to your account. And when it says you have a righteousness, Philippians 3, not your own but the righteousness of God, it means that the literal, perfect, righteous life of Jesus Christ has been put to your account and God treats you as if you lived His life. That's a staggering, staggering thing.

He couldn't just come down for the weekend. He couldn't just come down and die. That would be Him taking our place. He had to come down and live a perfect life so that we can take His place before God. And for a brief moment here it all comes into focus. "I'm not really your Son, Joseph, Mary. God is My Father. I don't really belong in your house. I belong in My Father's house." And here you see the wonder of divine Sonship. He is the true Son of God who delights to do His Father's will and who lived a perfect life that it might be accredited to the account of a worthless sinner for whom He died.

Well, what does that statement mean, verse 49? I'm going to try to plumb the depths of it next Sunday. Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You again this morning for the power of the Word, power of the truth, the wonder of Jesus Christ. We thank You that the Scripture just comes alive with its clarity and its depth and its drama. More than all of that, it's grace. The first words ever spoken by Jesus: A claim to divine Sonship. And what that meant was that He had come to do the Father's will, to take the place of sinners so they could take His place before the Father. We just thank You, our God, for the greatness of this plan, we thank You for the perfect life of Christ accredited to our account as if we had lived it. Such wondrous grace, undeserved, overwhelms us with gratitude. And we thank You and shall always thank You throughout all eternity for the One who lived a sinless life for us. Amen.

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