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The Visit to the Jerusalem Temple when Jesus Christ was Twelve

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THE VISIT TO THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS TWELVE

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast 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. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 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. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. 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. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them" (Lk. 2:41-50).

- This is but the first of many incidents in which people were astonished at the words and wisdom of Christ. This is recorded:
 1. Following His Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:28)
 2. At the end of His lecture in Nazareth (Mt. 13:54)
 3. During His debate with the Pharisees in Jerusalem (Mt. 22:33)

- Note also that Jesus spoke His first recorded words: *"I must be about my Father's business."* Compare these with the words He spoke en route from heaven's glory to Bethlehem's manger.

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me ... Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5, 7).

- Our Lord thus began His ministry by referring to the Father. Some twenty years later He would complete it in similar fashion, as seen through His first and last utterance on the cross:

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots" (Lk. 23:34).

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Lk. 23:46).

- Do we have any fictitious accounts of His early childhood? There are a number of Apocryphal Gospels (*apocryphal* means "hidden") that attempt to "fill us in" on the details, but their accounts are nonsensical.

Foster writes:

"In order to give an idea of the character of stories told in these Apocryphal Gospels, the following summary is offered of the records given in the First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ. The author pretends to have his information from Caiaphas, the High Priest. As Joseph and Mary are going to Bethlehem to be taxed they stop outside the town in a cave. Joseph goes in search of a Hebrew woman to act as midwife, but returns to find the cave filled with great lights and the Infant in the arms of His mother. The old Hebrew woman is cured by touching the child. The shepherds come and make a fire ready for the family. The heavenly hosts appear and sing. As an Infant in the cradle, Jesus informs Mary that He is the Son of God. The Wise Men preserve one of His swaddling clothes, which proves indestructible. When Jesus is presented in the temple, He shines like a pillar of light and the angels stand around adoring Him. When the family flees to Egypt, they stop in a city, a great idol falls from its pedestal, and the son of the priest is healed of infirmity. They flee to the haunts of robbers who are frightened away by a miraculous noise. Water is supplied by springs bursting forth. All sorts of cures are performed by the afflicted touching the child, his clothing, or by being sprinkled with the water in which he has been bathed. A young man who had been bewitched and turned into a mule is miraculously cured by the infant's being placed upon his back, and is married to a girl who had just been cured of leprosy. Joseph and Mary pass through a country infested by robbers. Titus, a humane thief, offers Dumachus, his comrade, forty goats to let Joseph and Mary pass without giving the alarm. The Infant prophesies that the two thieves shall be crucified and that Titus shall go before Him into Paradise. Jesus works miracles in Memphis and they return to Nazareth. Here Jesus and other boys play together and make clay figures of animals. Jesus causes them to walk and also makes clay birds which he causes to fly, eat, and drink. He goes to a dyer's shop and throws all the clothes into the furnace, but brings them forth again unharmed and miraculously dyed. The king of Jerusalem gives Joseph an order for a throne. Joseph works on it for two years in the king's palace and makes it two spans too short. Jesus lengthens it by a miracle. He miraculously widens or contracts the gates, milk pails, or boxes not properly made by Joseph." (*The Youth of Jesus in the Apocryphal Gospels*, R. C. Foster, pp. 286-288)