

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, we have an account of the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus: having had notice of his conception, and of the birth and infancy of his forerunner, in the former chapter. The First-begotten is here brought into the world; let us go meet him with our hosannas, blessed is he that cometh. Here is,

I. The place and other circumstances of his birth, which proved him to be the true Messiah, and such a one as we needed, but not such a one as the Jews expected (v. 1-7).

II. The notifying of his birth to the shepherds in that neighbourhood by an angel, the song of praise which the angels sung upon that occasion, and the spreading of the report of it by the shepherds (v. 8-20).

III. The circumcision of Christ, and the naming of him (v. 21).

IV. The presenting of him in the temple (v. 22-24).

V. The testimonies of Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, concerning him (v. 25-39).

VI. Christ's growth and capacity (v. 40-52).

VIII. His observing the passover at twelve years old, and his disputing with the doctors in the temple (v. 41-51). And this, with what we have met with (Matthew 1 and 2), is all we have concerning our Lord Jesus, till he entered upon his public work in the thirtieth year of his age.

LUKE 2:1-7

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The *fulness of time* was now come, when God would send forth his Son, *made of a woman*, and *made under the law*; and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

I. The time when our Lord Jesus was born. Several things may be gathered out of these verses which intimate to us that it was the *proper time*.

1. He was born at the time when the *fourth monarchy* was in its height, just when it was become, more than any of the three before it, a *universal monarchy*. He was born *in the days* of Augustus Caesar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called *Terrarum orbis imperium* — *The empire of the whole earth*; and here that empire is called *all the world* (v. 1), for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy (²⁷²⁴Daniel 2:44): *In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the state; by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius the Roman governor of Syria (v. 2): the Roman writers call him *Sulpitius Quirinus*. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, that Shiloh should come when the *sceptre was departed from Judah*, and the *lawgiver from between his feet*, ⁴¹⁰⁰Genesis 49:10. This was the *first taxing* that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance, as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now universal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut, which it never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of peace to be born, in whose days *swords should be beaten into ploughshares*.

II. The place where our Lord Jesus was born is very observable. He was born at *Bethlehem*; so it was foretold (³¹⁸²Micah 5:2), the scribes so understood it (⁴¹¹⁵Matthew 2:5, 6), so did the common people, ⁴¹¹²John

7:42. The name of the place was significant. Bethlehem signifies *the house of bread*; a proper place for him to be born in who is the Bread of life, the Bread that *came down from heaven*. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there *he* must be born who was the *Son of David*. Zion was also called *the city of David* (2 Samuel 5:7), yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David where he was born in meanness, to be a *shepherd*; and this our Saviour, when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, *that mount Zion*. Now when the virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, Providence so ordered it that, by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the *Roman empire* were to be *taxed*; that is, they were to *give in their names* to the proper officers, and they were to be *registered* and *enrolled*, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used; their being *taxed* was but secondary. It is supposed that they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's *attuning* tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

According to this *decree*, the Jews (who were now nice in distinguishing their tribes and families) provided that in their enrolments particular care should be had to preserve the memory of them. Thus foolishly are they solicitous to save the *shadow*, when they had lost the *substance*.

That which Augustus designed was either to gratify his *pride* in knowing the numbers of his people, and proclaiming it to the world, or he did it in *policy*, to strengthen his interest, and make his government appear the more formidable; but Providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being *enrolled*, only that Joseph and Mary may. This brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were *of the stock and lineage of David* (v. 4, 5); and perhaps, being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather than a burden and expense to them than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes, as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture that this great exactness was used only with the *family of David*, concerning which, it is probable, the emperor gave

particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. Divers ends of Providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the virgin Mary was brought, *great with child*, to Bethlehem, to be *delivered* there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie in at Nazareth. See how *man purposes and God disposes*; and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture, and makes use of the projects men have for serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the *seed* of David; for what brings his mother to Bethlehem now, but because she *was of the stock and lineage of David*? This was a material thing to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the earliest advocates for the Christian religion, appeal to these *rolls or records of the Roman empire*, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was *made under the law*; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a *servant of rulers*, ^{<340>}Isaiah 49:7. Many suppose that, being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how *he made himself of no reputation*, and *took upon him the form of a servant*. Instead of having kings tributaries to him, when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

III. The circumstances of his birth, which were very mean, and under all possible marks of contempt. He was indeed a *first-born son*; but it was a poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as first-born, but what was *in nativity*.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, as other children are when they are new-born, as if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. He that makes darkness a *swaddling band for the sea* was himself wrapped in *swaddling bands*, ^{<330>}Job 38:9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said to him whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, *We know this man, whence he is*, ^{<417>}John 7:27. The Ancient of days became an infant of a span long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself.

(1.) He was born *at an inn*. That son of David that was the glory of his father's house had no inheritance that he could command, no not in the city of David, no nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born *in an inn*, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for awhile, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. An inn receives all comers, and so does Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his sign, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only, unlike other inns, he welcomes those that come *without money and without price*. All is on free cost.

(2.) He was born *in a stable*; so some think the word signifies which we translate *a manger*, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in. Because there was *no room in the inn*, and for want of conveniences, nay for want of necessaries, he was laid *in a manger*, instead of a cradle. The word which we render *swaddling clothes* some derive from a word that signifies to *rend*, or *tear*, and these infer that he was so far from having a good suit of child-bed linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable and laid in a manger was an instance,

[1.] Of the poverty of his parents. Had they been rich, room would have been made for them; but, being poor, they must *shift* as they *could*.

[2.] Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them, they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable.

[3.] It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses, the great prophet and lawgiver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ *in a manger*. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since *his own received him not*, let us not think it strange if they *receive us not*.

ANGELS APPEAR TO THE SHEPHERDS

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory, to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself God did in some measure exalt him and give him earnest of his future exaltation. When we saw him *wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger*, we were tempted to say, "Surely this cannot be the *Son of God*." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely this cannot be the *Son of God*." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely it can be no other than the *Son of God*, concerning whom it was said, when he was *brought into the world*, *Let all the angels of God worship him*," ^{◀306▶} Hebrews 1:6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this ambassador, this prince from heaven, to the wise men, who were Gentiles, by a star; here we are told of the notice given of it to the shepherds, who were Jews, by an angel: to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with.

I. See here how the shepherds were employed; they were *abiding in the fields* adjoining to Bethlehem, and *keeping watch over their flocks by night*, v. 8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders (they were not prepared to receive these tidings), but to a company of poor shepherds, who were like Jacob, *plain men dwelling in tents*, not like Esau, *cunning hunters*. The patriarchs were shepherds. Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would show that he had still a favour for those of that innocent employment. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout pious men, the tidings were brought of a *greater salvation*. Observe,

1. They were not *sleeping* in their beds, when this news was brought them (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in *slumbering upon the bed*), but *abiding in the fields*, and *watching*. Those that would hear from God must *stir up themselves*. They were broad awake, and

therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so as those may be who are half asleep.

2. They were employed now, not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were *keeping watch over their flock*, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it being probably in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not house them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

II. How they were surprised with the appearance of the angel (v. 9): *Behold, an angel of the Lord came upon them*, of a sudden, *epeste* — *stood over them*; most probably, in the air over their heads, as coming immediately from heaven. We read it, *the angel*, as if it were the same that appeared once and again in the chapter before, *the angel Gabriel*, that was caused to fly swiftly; but that is not certain. The angel's *coming upon them* intimates that they little thought of such a thing, or expected it; for it is in a *preventing* way that gracious visits are made us from heaven, *or ever we are aware*. That they might be sure it was an angel from heaven, they saw and heard the *glory of the Lord round about them*; such as made the night as bright as day, such a glory as used to attend God's appearance, a *heavenly glory*, or an *exceedingly great glory*, such as they could not bear the dazzling lustre of. This made them *sore afraid*, put them into great consternation, as fearing some evil tidings. While we are conscious to ourselves of so much guilt, we have reason to fear lest every express from heaven should be a messenger of wrath.

III. What the message was which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, v. 10-12.

1. He gives a *supersedeas* to their fears: “*Fear not*, for we have nothing to say to you that needs be a terror to you; you *need not* fear your enemies, and *should not* fear your friends.”

2. He furnishes them with abundant matter for joy: “Behold, I *evangelize to you great joy*; I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring *joy to all people*, and not to the people of the Jews only; that *unto you is born this day*, at this time, a *Saviour*, the Saviour that has been so long expected, *which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David*,” v. 11. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed; he is *the Lord*, Lord of all; he is a sovereign prince; nay, he is God, for *the*

Lord, in the Old Testament, answers to *Jehovah*. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those only that accept him for their Lord. “The Saviour *is born*, he is born *this day*; and, since it is matter of *great joy to all people*, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born in the place where it was foretold he should be born, in the *city of David*; and he is born *to you*; to you Jews he is sent in the first place, to *bless you*, to you *shepherds*, though poor and mean in the world.” This refers to ^{<396>}Isaiah 9:6, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*. To *you* men, not to *us* angels; he took not on him the nature of angels. This is matter of *joy* indeed to all people, *great joy*. Long-looked for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, *for he cometh*.

3. He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. “How shall we find out this child in Bethlehem, which is now full of the descendants from David?” “You will find him by this token: he is lying in a *manger*, where surely never any new-born infant was laid before.” They expected to be told, “You shall find him, though a babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich liveries.” “No, you will find him wrapped in *swaddling clothes*, and *laid in a manger*.” When Christ was here upon earth, he *distinguished* himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his *humiliation*.

IV. The angels' *doxology* to God, and *congratulations* of men, upon this solemn occasion, v. 13, 14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel (that was sufficient to go express) than suddenly there was with that angel *a multitude of the heavenly hosts*; sufficient, we may be sure, to make a *chorus*, that were heard by the shepherds, *praising God*; and certainly their song was not like that (^{<643>}Revelation 14:3) which *no man could learn*, for it was designed that we should all learn it.

1. Let God have the honour of this work: *Glory to God in the highest*. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds very much to his praise; and angels in the highest heavens, though not immediately interested in it themselves, will celebrate it to his honour, ^{<651>}Revelation 5:11, 12. *Glory to God*, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it in such a way as that one divine attribute should not be glorified at the expense of another, but the honour of all effectually secured and advanced. Other works of God are

for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his *glory in the highest*.

2. Let men have the joy of it: *On earth peace, good-will toward men*. God's *good-will* in sending the Messiah introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resettled a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from it: peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile. Peace is here put for *all good*, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. All the *good* we have, or hope, is owing to God's *good-will*; and, if we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any *peace*, and *good*, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a *Mediator*. Here was the *peace proclaimed* with great solemnity; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. It is on earth peace, to *men of good-will* (so some copies read it), *en anthropois eudokias*; to men who have a *good-will to God*, and are willing to be reconciled; or to men whom God has a *good-will to*, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a *faithful saying*, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well *worthy of all acceptance*, *That the good-will of God toward men is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth*.

V. The visit which the shepherds made to the new-born Saviour.

1. They consulted about it, v. 15. While the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only; but, *when they were gone away from them into heaven* (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had despatched their business), *the shepherds said one to another, Let us go to Bethlehem*. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, no nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. But observe, These shepherds do not speak doubtfully, "Let us go see whether it be so or no;" but with assurance, *Let us go see this thing which is come to pass*; for what room was left to doubt of it,

when *the Lord had thus made it known to them?* The word spoken by angels was *stedfast* and unquestionably true.

2. They immediately made the visit, v. 16. They lost no time, but *came with haste* to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to more particularly than is recorded (“Go to the stable of such an inn”); and there *they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.* The poverty and meanness in which they found *Christ the Lord* were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angels they had seen, and the song of the angels they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

VI. The care which the shepherds took to spread the report of this (v. 17): *When they had seen it,* though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was *Christ the Lord,* yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued (²⁷¹⁹2 Kings 12:9, This being *a day of good tidings,* we dare not *hold our peace*), so they made *known abroad* the whole story of what was *told them,* both by the *angels,* and by Joseph and Mary, *concerning this child,* that he was the Saviour, even *Christ the Lord,* that in him there is *peace on earth,* and that he was *conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost,* and *born of a virgin.* This they told every body, and agreed in their testimony concerning it. And now if, when he *is in the world,* the world knows him not, it is *their own fault,* for they have sufficient notice given them. What impression did it make upon people? Why truly, *All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds,* v. 18. The shepherds were plain, downright, *honest men,* and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them; what they had said therefore was likely to be true, and, if true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born *in a stable* and not in a palace, that angels should bring news of it to *poor shepherds* and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never *enquired any further* about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a *nine*

days' wonder. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace *hid from their eyes*, when they thus wilfully *shut their eyes* against them.

VII. The use which those made of these things, who did believe them.

1. The virgin Mary made them the matter of her *private meditation*. She said little, but *kept all these things*, and *pondered them in her heart*, v. 19. She laid the evidences together, and kept them in reserve, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterwards be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find that, if no one else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do. Note, The truths of Christ are worth keeping; and the way to keep them safe is to *ponder them*. Meditation is the best help to memory.

2. The shepherds made them the matter of their more *public praises*. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were (v. 20): They *returned, glorifying and praising God*, in concurrence with the holy angels. If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what *they had heard* from the angel, and for what *they had seen*, the babe *in the manger*, and just then *in the swaddling*, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God that they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation. As afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his *manger*, was to some *foolishness* and a *stumbling-block*, but others saw in it, and admired, and praised, the *wisdom of God* and the *power of God*.

◀▶ LUKE 2:21-24

CHRIST PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE

Our Lord Jesus, being *made of a woman*, was *made under the law*,
◀▶ Galatians 4:4. He was not only, as the son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of *nature*, but as the son of a daughter of Abraham was made under the law of *Moses*; he put his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a *shadow of good things to come*. Though its

institutions were *beggarly elements*, and *rudiments of this world*, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us.

Now here we have two instances of his being *made under* that *law*, and submitting to it.

I. He was *circumcised* on the very day that the law appointed (v. 21): *When eight days were accomplished*, that day seven-night that he was born, they *circumcised* him.

1. Though it was a *painful operation* (*Surely a bloody husband thou has been*, said Zipporah to Moses, *because of the circumcision*, ^{<Q>}Exodus 4:25), yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, *therefore* he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterwards he poured out in purple streams.

2. Though it supposed him a *stranger*, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his *beloved Son*; nay, though it supposed him a *sinner*, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, *yet* he submitted to it; nay, *therefore* he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of *flesh*, but of *sinful flesh*, ^{<R>}Romans 8:3.

3. Though thereby he made himself a *debtor to the whole law* (^{<G>}Galatians 5:3), yet he submitted to it; nay, *therefore* he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the form of a servant, though he was free-born. Christ was circumcised,

(1.) That he might own himself of the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and who was to take on him the seed of Abraham, ^{<S>}Hebrews 2:16.

(2.) That he might own himself a surety for our sins, and an undertaker for our safety. Circumcision (saith Dr. Goodwin) was our *bond*, whereby we acknowledged ourselves *debtors to the law*; and Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being *made sin for us*. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before could oblige themselves to.

(3.) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church to God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was (~~<4011>~~Romans 4:11), and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy than his being baptized at thirty years old doth for the deferring of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him; he was called *Jesus* or *Joshua*, for he was *so named of the angel* to his mother Mary *before he was conceived in the womb* (~~<4013>~~Luke 1:31), and to his supposed father Joseph after, ~~<4012>~~Matthew 1:21.

[1.] It was a *common name* among the Jews, as John was (~~<5011>~~Colossians 4:11), and in this he would be made *like unto his brethren*.

[2.] It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament, Joshua, the successor of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua, the high priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a *priest upon his throne*, ~~<3011>~~Zechariah 6:11, 13.

[3.] It was very significant of his undertaking. *Jesus* signifies a *Saviour*. He would be denominated, not from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as Mediator; he *brings salvation*.

II. He was *presented* in the temple. This was done with an eye to the law, and at the time appointed by the law, when he was forty days old, *when the days of her purification were accomplished*, v. 22. Many copies, and authentic ones, read *auton* for *autes*, *the days of their purification*, the purification both of the mother and of the child, for so it was intended to be by the law; and our Lord *Jesus*, though he had no impurity to be cleansed from, yet submitted to it, as he did to circumcision, because he was made *sin for us*; and that, as by the *circumcision of Christ* we might be *circumcised*, in the virtue of our union and communion with him, with a spiritual circumcision *made without hands* (~~<5011>~~Colossians 2:11), so in the *purification of Christ* we might be *spiritually purified* from the filthiness and corruption which we brought into the world with us. Now, according to the law,

1. The child Jesus, being a first-born son, was *presented to the Lord*, in one of the courts of the temple. The law is here recited (v. 23): *Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord*, because by a special writ of protection the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel; so that Christ, as first-born, was a priest by a title surer than that of Aaron's house. Christ was the *first-born* among many brethren, and was *called holy to the Lord*, so as never any other was; yet he was *presented to the Lord* as other first-born were, and no otherwise. Though he was newly come out of the bosom of the Father, yet he was *presented* to him by the hands of a priest, as if he had been a stranger, that needed one to introduce him. His being *presented to the Lord* now signified his *presenting himself* to the Lord as Mediator, when he was caused to *draw near* and *approach unto him*, ^{<2421>}Jeremiah 30:21. But, according to the law, he was *redeemed*, ^{<0485>}Numbers 18:15. *The first-born of many shalt thou redeem*, and *five shekels* was the value, ^{<0276>}Leviticus 27:6: ^{<0486>}Numbers 18:16. But probably in case of poverty the priest was allowed to take less, or perhaps nothing; for no mention is made of it here. Christ was *presented to the Lord*, not to be *brought back*, for his *ear was bored* to God's *door-post* to serve him for ever; and though he is not left in the temple as Samuel was, to minister there, yet like him he is given to the Lord *as long as he lives*, and ministers to him in the true temple *not made with hands*.

2. The mother brought her offering, v. 24. When she had presented that son of hers unto the Lord who was to be the great sacrifice, she might have been excused from offering any other; but so *it is said in the law of the Lord*, that law which was yet in force, and therefore so it must be done, she must offer a *pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons*; had she been of ability, she must have brought a *lamb for a burnt-offering*, and a *dove for a sin-offering*; but, being poor, and not able to reach the price of a lamb, she brings *two doves*, one for a *burnt-offering* and the other for a *sin-offering* (see ^{<0276>}Leviticus 12:6, 8), to teach us in every address to God, and particularly in those upon special occasions, both to give thanks to God for his mercies to us and to acknowledge with sorrow and shame our sins against him; in both we must give glory to him, nor do we ever want matter for both. Christ was not *conceived* and *born* in sin, as others are, so that there was not that occasion in his case which there is in others; yet, because he was made under the law, he complied with it. *Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Much more doth it become the best of men

to join in confessions of sin; for *who can say, I have made my heart clean?*

LUKE 2:25-40

CHRIST AND SIMEON IN THE TEMPLE

Even when he humbles himself, still Christ has honour done him to balance the offence of it. That we might not be stumbled at the *meanness of his birth*, angels then did him honour; and now, that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him, but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

I. A very honourable testimony is borne to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the child and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introduction of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those *watchmen* had not been *blind*. Now observe here,

1. The account that is given us concerning this Simeon, or Simon. He dwelt now in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his piety and communion with God. Some learned men, who have been conversant with the Jewish writers, find that there was at this time one Simeon, a man of great note in Jerusalem, the son of Hillel, and the first to whom they gave the title of *Rabban*, the highest title that they gave to their doctors, and which was never given but to seven of them. He succeeded his father Hillel, as president of the college which his father founded, and of the great Sanhedrim. The Jews say that he was endued with a *prophetical* spirit, and that he was turned out of his place because he witnessed against the common opinion of the Jews concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; and they likewise observe that there is no mention of him in their Mishna, or book of traditions, which intimates that he was no patron of those fooleries. One thing objected against this conjecture is that at this time his father Hillel was living, and that he himself lived many years after this, as appears by the Jewish histories; but, as to that, he is not here said to be old; and his saying, *Now let thy servant depart* intimates that he was willing to die *now*, but does not conclude that therefore he did die quickly.

St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as *near*, ~~405~~ Acts 20:25. Another thing objected is that the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to Christianity; but, as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ to have a son a bigoted Pharisee.

The account given of him here is,

- (1.) That he was *just* and *devout*, *just* towards men and *devout* towards God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will atone for the defect of the other.
- (2.) That he *waited for the consolation of Israel*, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find *consolation*. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the matter and ground of it, the *consolation of Israel*. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come continued *waiting, desiring* his coming, and *hoping* for it with *patience*; I had almost said, with some degree of *impatience* waiting till it came. He *understood by books*, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, *As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel*, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be very welcome to those who have *waited* for it, and continue waiting.
- (3.) The *Holy Ghost* was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and enabled to speak things above himself.
- (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, v. 26. He was searching *what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he received *this oracle* (for so the word signifies), *that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed*. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage *see death*, and look it in the face without terror, that have had by faith a sight of Christ.

2. The seasonable coming of Simeon into the temple, at the time when Christ was presented there, v. 27. Just then, when Joseph and Mary

brought in the child, to be registered as it were in the church-book, among the first-born, Simeon came, by direction of *the Spirit*, into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the support of his hope now provided for the transport of his joy. It was whispered in his ear, “Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see.” Note, Those that would see Christ must go to his temple; for there *The Lord, whom ye seek*, shall suddenly come to *meet you*, and there you must be ready to *meet him*.

3. The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight: *He took him up in his arms* (v. 28), he *embraced* him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which was as full of joy as it could hold. He *took him up in his arms*, to present him to the Lord (so some think), to do either the parent's part or the priest's part; for divers of the ancients say that he was himself a priest. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ with love and resignation, then we *take Christ in our arms*. It was promised him that he should have a sight of Christ; but more is *performed* than was *promised*: he has him in his arms.

4. The solemn declaration he made hereupon: *He blessed God*, and said, *Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace*, v. 29-32.

(1.) He has a pleasant prospect *concerning himself*, and (which is a great attainment) is got quite above the love of life and fear of death; nay, he is arrived at a holy contempt of life, and desire of death: “*Lord, now let thou thy servant depart*, for mine eyes have seen the salvation I was promised a sight of before I died.” Here is,

[1.] An acknowledgment that God had been *as good as his word*; there has not failed one tittle of his good promises, as Solomon owns, ~~1085~~ 1 Kings 8:56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word were made ashamed of their hope.

[2.] A thanksgiving for it. He *blessed God* that he saw that salvation in his arms which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not.

[3.] A confession of his faith, that the child in his arms was the *saviour*, the *Salvation* itself; *thy salvation*, the salvation of thine appointing, the salvation *which thou has prepared* with a great deal of contrivance. And,

while it has been thus long *in the coming*, it hath still been *in the preparing*.

[4.] It is a farewell to this world: “*Now let thy servant depart*; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world.” The eye is not satisfied with seeing (^{<2018>}Ecclesiastes 1:8), till it hath *seen Christ*, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms and salvation in his eye! Now adieu to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself.

[5.] It is a welcome to death: *Now let thy servant depart*. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God give us our discharge, for we are his *servants* and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our time. Moses was promised that he should see Canaan, and then *die*; but he prayed that this word might be altered, ^{<0524>}Deuteronomy 3:24, 25. Simeon is promised that he should not *see death* till he had *seen Christ*; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die: *Lord, be it so*, saith he, *now let me depart*. See here, *First*, How *comfortable* the death of a good man is; he departs *as God's servant* from the place of his toil to that of his rest. He departs *in peace*, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; *in peace* with death, well-reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs *according to God's word*, as Moses at the *word of the Lord* (^{<0450>}Deuteronomy 34:5): the word of precept, *Go up and die*; the word of promise, *I will come again and receive you to myself*. *Secondly*, What is the ground of this comfort? *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. This bespeaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob (^{<0450>}Genesis 46:30), *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face*. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it *gain*, ^{<0121>}Philippians 1:21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ may welcome death.

(2.) He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This salvation shall be,

[1.] A blessing to the world. It is *prepared before the face of all people*, not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known; to be a *light to lighten the*

Gentiles that now sit in darkness: they shall have the knowledge of him, and of God, and another world through him. This has reference to ^{<2906>}Isaiah 49:6, *I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles*; for Christ came to be the light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the *Sun of righteousness*.

[2.] A blessing to the church: *the glory of thy people Israel*. It was an honour to the Jewish nation that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed *the glory*, and will be so to eternity, ^{<2809>}Isaiah 60:19. They shall *glory* in him. *In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory*, ^{<2855>}Isaiah 45:25. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a *light to lighten the Gentiles*; and when he added, *beginning at Jerusalem*, he made himself *the glory of his people Israel*.

5. The prediction concerning this child, which he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They *marvelled at those things* which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this child, v. 33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

(1.) Simeon shows them what reason they had to *rejoice*; for he *blessed them* (v. 34), he pronounced them blessed who had the honour to be related to this child, and were entrusted with the bringing him up. He *prayed* for them, that God would *bless* them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this child should be, not only a comfort and honour to them, but a public blessing. He is set *for the rising again of many in Israel*, that is, for the conversion of many to God that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he is set *for the fall of* may be the same with those whom he is set *for the rising again of*. He is set *eis ptosin kai anastasin* — *for their fall, in order to their rising again*; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ; he wounds and then heals, Paul *falls*, and rises again.

(2.) He shows them likewise what reason they had to *rejoice with trembling*, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, ^{<4901>}Psalms 2:11. Lest Joseph, and Mary especially,

should be *lifted up* with the abundance of the revelations, here is a *thorn in the flesh* for them, an allay to their joy; and it is what we sometimes need.

[1.] It is true, Christ shall be a blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel whom he is *set for the fall of*, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a *stone of stumbling*. This refers to that prophecy (~~2184~~ Isaiah 8:14, 15), He shall be *for a sanctuary* to some, and yet for a *snare* to others, ~~1807~~ 1 Peter 2:7, 8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set for a *sign*, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many *eyes upon him*, during the time of his public ministry, he was a *sign*, but he had many *tongues against him*, the contradiction and reproach of sinners, he was continually cavilled at and abused; and the effects of this will be that the *thoughts of many hearts will be revealed* (v. 35), that is, upon this occasion, men will *show themselves*, will discover, and so distinguish, themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some will be revealed by their embracing Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they for *him*, or are they for his *adversaries*? The *word of God* is a discerner of the *thoughts and intents of the heart*, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

[2.] It is true, Christ shall be a comfort to his mother; but be not thou too proud of it, for *a sword shall pass through thine own soul also*. He shall be a suffering Jesus; and, *First*, “Thou shalt suffer with him, by sympathy, more than any other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection, to him.” When he was abused, it was *a sword in her bones*. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think her inward grief was such that it might truly be said, *A sword pierced through her soul*, it cut her to the heart. *Secondly*, Thou shalt suffer for him. Many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In

the midst of our greatest delights and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that bonds and afflictions abide us.

II. He is taken notice of by one *Anna*, or *Ann*, a *prophetess*, that one of each sex might bear witness to him in whom both *men* and *women* are invited to believe, that they may be saved. Observe,

1. The account here given of this *Anna*, who she was. She was,

(1.) A *prophetess*; the Spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the *younger women* in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God *left not himself without witness*.

(2.) She was *the daughter of Phanuel*; her father's name (says Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's *Phanuel*, or *Penuel* (^{<1330}Genesis 32:30), that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies *gracious*.

(3.) She was of *the tribe of Asher*, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of to refute those who said, *Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*, when no sooner did prophecy revive but it appeared from Galilee.

(4.) She was of *a great age*, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow, and then she must be considerably above a hundred years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise.

(5.) She was a constant resident *in* or at least attendant *on* the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an almshouse, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not *departing from the temple* means no more, than that she was constantly there at the time of divine service: when any good work was to be done, she was ready

to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she *served God with fastings and prayers night and day*: having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only *fasted twice in the week*, but always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in religious exercises which others spent in eating and drinking and sleeping; she not only observed the *hours of prayer*, but prayed *night and day*; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, was frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in these she *served God*; that was it that put a value upon them and an excellency into them. The Pharisees *fasted often*, and made *long prayers*, but they served themselves, and their own pride and covetousness, in their fastings and prayers; but this good woman not only did that which was good, but did it from a good principle, and with a good end; she *served God*, and aimed at his honour, in *fasting and praying*. Note,

[1.] Devotion is a thing we ought to be constant in; other duties are in season now and then, but we must *pray always*.

[2.] It is a pleasant sight to see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, as those that are not *weary of well-doing*, that do not think themselves *above* these exercises, or *past* them, but that take more and more pleasure in them, and see more and more need of them, till they come to heaven.

[3.] Those that are diligent and faithful in improving the light and means they have shall have further discoveries made them. Anna is now at length abundantly recompensed for her attendance so many years in the temple.

2. The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus (v. 38): *She came in at that instant* when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him; she, who was so *constant* to the temple, could not miss the opportunity.

Now,

(1.) She *gave thanks likewise to the Lord*, just as Simeon, perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is *made known* have reason enough to *give thanks to the Lord* for so great a favour;

and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should not we *give thanks likewise*, as well as they? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. *She confessed unto the Lord* (so it may be read); she made an open profession of her faith concerning this child.

(2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him: She *spoke of him to all them* that believed the Messiah would come, and with him *looked for redemption in Jerusalem*. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; *redemption in Jerusalem*, for thence the *word of the Lord was to go forth*, ^{<218B>}Isaiah 2:3. Some there were in Jerusalem that *looked for redemption*; yet but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with all them that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterwards that of his resurrection. Note, Those that have an acquaintance with Christ *themselves* should do all they can to bring *others* acquainted with him.

Lastly, Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus.

1. *Where he spent it*, v. 39. When the ceremony of presenting the child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they *returned into Galilee*. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were returned into Galilee; but it appears by St. Matthew's gospel (Matthew 2) that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and, returning thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters in Nazareth, whence they had been perhaps some years absent. It is here called *their own city*, because there they had lived a great while, and their relations were there. He was ordered further from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself and *make himself of no reputation*.

2. *How he spent it*, v. 40. In all things *it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*, and therefore he passed through infancy and childhood as other children did, yet without sin; nay, with manifest indications of a divine nature in him. As other children, he *grew* in stature of body, and the

improvement of understanding in his human soul, that his *natural* body might be a figure of his *mystical* body, which, though animated by a perfect spirit, yet *maketh increase of itself* till it comes to the *perfect man*,
Ephesians 4:13, 16. But,

(1.) Whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was *strong in spirit*. By the Spirit of God his human soul was endued with extraordinary vigour, and all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating.

(2.) Whereas other children have *foolishness bound in their hearts*, which appears in what they say or do, he was *filled with wisdom*, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did was wisely said, and wisely done, above his years.

(3.) Whereas other children show that the corruption of nature is in them, and *the tares of sin* grow up with the *wheat of reason*, he made it appear that nothing but *the grace of God was upon him* (the wheat sprang up without tares), and that, whereas other children are by nature children of wrath, he was *greatly beloved*, and high in the favour of God; that God loved him, and cherished him, and took a particular care of him.

LUKE 2:41-52

CHRIST SITTING WITH THE DOCTORS

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are concerned to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is,

I. Christ's *going up with his parents* to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, v. 41, 42.

1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expenses of it. Note, Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must *not forsake the*

assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbin at Jerusalem; yet they *went up* thither, *after the custom of the feast.* *The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,* and so should we. We have reason to suppose that Joseph went up likewise at the feasts of *pentecost* and *tabernacles*; for all the males were to appear there *thrice a year*, but Mary only at the *passover*, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2. The child Jesus, at *twelve years old*, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say that at twelve years old children must begin to fast from time to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement; and that at thirteen years old a child begins to be *a son of the commandment*, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, *a son of the covenant*. It is not said that this was the *first time* that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast: probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his years; and all should attend on public worship that can *hear with understanding*, ^{<K&L>}Nehemiah 8:2. Those children that are forward in other things should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas; and those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God should be called upon, when they are grown up, to come to the *gospel passover*, to the Lord's supper, that they make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

II. Christ's *tarrying behind his parents at Jerusalem*, unknown to them, in which he designed to give an early specimen of what he was reserved for.

1. His parents did not return till they had *fulfilled the days*; they had staid there all the seven days at the feast, though it was not absolutely necessary that they should stay longer than the two first days, after which many went home. Note, It is good to stay to the conclusion of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, *It is good to be here*, and not to hasten away, as if we were like Doeg, *detained before the Lord*.

2. The child *tarried behind in Jerusalem*, not because he was loth to go home, or shy of his parents' company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know that he had a *Father in heaven*,

whom he was to be *observant* of more than of *them*; and respect to *him* must not be construed disrespect to *them*. Some conjecture that he tarried behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, on the morning that they were to go home, to go first to the temple, to worship God; there he *staid behind*, and found entertainment there till they found him again. Or, perhaps, he staid at the house where they lodged, or some other friend's house (and such a child as he was could not but be the darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company), and went up to the temple only at church-time; but so it was that he staid behind. It is good to see young people willing to *dwell in the house of the Lord*; they are then like Christ.

3. His parents went the *first day's journey* without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they *supposed him to have been in the company*, v. 44. On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they *sought him among their kindred and acquaintance*, that were upon the road, going down. Pray did you see our Son? or, Did you see him? Like the spouses's inquiry, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* This was a jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among *his kinsfolk and acquaintance*, but among them they *found him not*, v. 45. There are many, too many, who are our kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but *there* they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with ~~Gen~~ Job 23:8, 9.

4. When they found him not at their quarters at night, they *turned back again*, next morning, *to Jerusalem, seeking him*. Note, Those that would find Christ must *seek till they find*; for he will at length be found of those that seek him, and will be found their bountiful rewarder. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how, they lost them, and must *turn back again* to the place where they last had them; must *remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works*, and *return to their first love*, ~~Gen~~ Revelation 2:4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ must go to Jerusalem, the *city of our solemnities*, the place which he has *chosen to put his name there*; must

attend upon him in his ordinances, in the gospel-passover, there they may hope to meet him.

5. The *third day* they found him *in the temple*, in some of the apartments belonging to the temple, where the doctors of the law kept, not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him *sitting in the midst of them* (v. 46), not standing as a *catechumen* to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was *filled with wisdom* (v. 40), but that he had both a desire to increase it and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to *sit in the midst* of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at *twelve years old*, and sooner, to enquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presage in youth to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now would have been playing with the *children in the temple*, but he was sitting with the *doctors in the temple*.

(1.) He *heard* them. Those that would *learn* must be *swift to hear*.

(2.) He *asked them questions*; whether, as a teacher (he had authority so to ask) or as a learner (he had humility so to ask) I know not, or whether as an associate, or joint-searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions.

(3.) He returned *answers* to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, v. 47. And his wisdom and *understanding* appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him *were astonished*: they never heard one so young, no indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had *more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients*, ~~EBB~~ Psalm 119:99, 100. Now Christ showed forth some rays of his glory, which were presently drawn in again. He *gave them a taste* (says Calvin) of his divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that *he supposed his brethren would have understood*, by that, *how God by his hand would deliver them*, ~~412~~ Acts 7:24, 25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then,

but *they understood not*; so they here might have had Christ (for aught I know) to enter upon his work now, but they were only *astonished*, and *understood not* the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

6. His mother talked with him privately about it. When the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, v. 48. Joseph and Mary were both *amazed* to find him there, and to find that he had so much respect showed him as to be admitted to *sit among the doctors*, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But,

(1.) His mother told him how ill they took it: “*Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?*” They were ready to say, as Jacob of Joseph, “*A wild beast has devoured him; or, He is fallen into the hands of some more cruel enemy, who has at length found out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago.*” A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another. “*Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee along with us.*” Note, Those may have leave to complain of their losses that think they have lost Christ. But their *weeping* did not hinder *sowing*; they did not sorrow and sit down in despair, but sorrowed and *sought*. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him *sorrowing*, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow shall find him, at length, with so much the greater joy.

(2.) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him (v. 49): “*How is it that you sought me? You might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I had to do here. I could not be lost in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be, en tois tou patros mou; — in my Father's house?*” so some read it; “*where else should the Son be, who abideth in the house for ever? I ought to be,*”

[1.] “*Under my Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it.*” Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, ²³⁰⁰ Isaiah 49:2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let us never despair of its safety.

[2.] “*At my Father's work*” (so we take it): “I must be *about my Father's business*, and therefore could not go home as soon as you might. *Wist ye not?* Have you not already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it?” Herein he hath left us an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done and said. It was his errand into the world, and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father's will, and finish his work: and yet at that time his parents *understood not this saying*, v. 50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple for his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They *understood not* his prophetic office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short. It was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem or to settle him there (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom), but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was, as it were, buried alive. Doubtless, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, three times a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told; it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was *subject to his parents*. Though once, to show that he was *more than a man*, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business, yet he did not, as yet, make that his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was *subject to them*, observed their order, and went and came as they directed, and, as it should seem, worked with his father at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being *made of a woman*, he was made under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the *seed* of the faithful thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his *supposed* father, yet he was *subject to them*; though he was *strong in spirit*, and *filled with wisdom* nay though he was the Son of God,

yet he was subject to his parents; how then will *they* answer it who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her son's sayings, yet *kept them in her heart*, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men's sayings because they are obscure (*Si non vis intelligi debes negligi — If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable*), yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, so that we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy; we should therefore *lay it up* for hereafter. See ~~John~~ John 2:22. We may find use for that another time which now we see not how to make useful to us. A *scholar* keeps those grammar rules in memory which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be of use to him; so we must do by Christ's sayings.

3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration (v. 52): *He increased in wisdom and stature*. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in *stature* and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in *wisdom*, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the divinity that dwelt in him manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, *ad modum recipientis — in proportion to his capacity*; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in *favour with God and man*, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an *infant* and a *child*. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom, and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour *with God and man*.