

### The Boy Jesus Asserts His Undiminished Deity in Response to His Anxious Mother's Concern, Luke 2:49; He Places Himself in Continuous Subordination to Joseph & Mary, v. 51; the Hypostatic Union Defined

**Luke 2:49** - "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

If you have a red-letter Bible you will note that, chronologically, this is the first recorded statement made by our Lord. His response is presented with interrogatives which allow Him to subtly remind His mother of pertinent doctrines.

She should have remembered that He was twelve. He is now at a point where He must go into intense preparation for manhood; at His next birthday He enters into manhood and becomes personally responsible to the Law. This is an opportunity to try out His wings before the elite theologians of the day whom He duly impressed.

Mary, as is the case with all mothers, was no doubt worried about His safety. This is especially understandable considering the attempted assassination by Herod, the emergency evacuation to Egypt, and the potential threats from Archelaus.

Jesus is saying, "I am the Messiah. God's plan for Me is to achieve adulthood, to present the kingdom, and ultimately to become a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the human race. In order to prepare for that mission I must engage in theological discussions with the rabbis."

Implication? You should have known where I'd be and why: "I had to be in my Father's house."

This second question is loaded as well. First of all the statement is idiomatic and is better stated, "I must be about My Father's business":

Or "I must be about my Father's business"; Grk "in the [things] of my Father," with an ellipsis. This verse involves an idiom that probably refers to the necessity of Jesus being involved in the instruction of God, given what he is doing. The most widely held view today takes this as a reference to the temple as the Father's house. Jesus is saying that his parents should have known where he was.<sup>1</sup>

The Lord has shifted into high gear. In verse 48, Mary calls Him "Son," the vocative of address of the noun **τέκνον (teknon)**. This word is used as a tender term of address directed toward genuine descendants.

Mary identified the source of concern to be not only herself but also Joseph, "Son, why have You treated us this way?" *Us* is the dative of disadvantage of the plural pronoun **ἐγὼ (egō)** which includes Joseph.

She continues by saying, "Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." *Your* is the genitive of relationship of **σου (sou)** indicating that Joseph is Jesus' biological father, a point confirmed by the noun "father" – **πατήρ (patēr)** – which Joseph is not.

The Lord makes this point with another interrogative, "Didn't you know I had to be about My Father's business?" Here the possessive personal pronoun "My" is **μου (mou)** followed by the Proper noun "Father": **Πατήρ (Patēr)** referring to God the Father.

The Lord was not being rude but deftly comforts His mother by making the point that at age twelve they should have known He would be at His Father's house doing His Father's business.

<sup>1</sup> *The NET Bible* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1843n1.

Mary will learn an important principle from this exchange: She is going to have to begin the process of making the transition away from the mother of a *teknon* over to a follower of the Messiah. However, at first, neither she nor Joseph grasped the impact of the Lord's rhetorical questions:

**Luke 2:50** - But they [Joseph and Mary] did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

However, the Lord was only making a point; He did not intend to separate Himself out from under their parental authority which He demonstrated throughout the remainder of His youth:

**Luke 2:51** - And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

The Lord removed Himself from the discussion among the Rabbis and went down from the temple mount with His parents and accompanied them back to Nazareth.

His genuine humility is demonstrated by the following clause, "He continued in subjection to them."

The impact of this sentence is found in what is called an "imperfect periphrastic" which involves a verb and a verbal participle.

The verb is the imperfect indicative of **εἶμι** (*eimi*) translated "was," and the present passive participle of the adverb **ὑποτάσσω** (*hypotassō*) translated "continuously subordinated."

Some definitions are helpful here:

\pe-rif'-ră-sis\ : a roundabout way of referring to something by means of several words instead of naming it directly in a single word or phrase. Adjective: periphrastic \per-a-fras'-tik\.<sup>2</sup>

**Imperfect periphrastic:** Here we have the present participle of *hypotassō* and the imperfect of *eimi*. This construction is decidedly durative in significance.<sup>3</sup>

This construction informs us that the Lord placed Himself in complete subordination to Joseph and Mary and this attitude continued throughout His childhood.

The passive voice of *hypotassō* means that Jesus receives the action of the verb of submission. This indicates His submission to the Fifth Commandment:

**Exodus 20:12** - Honor your father and your mother ...

This standard is repeated in the New Testament, first of all by the Lord in:

**Matthew 15:4** - "God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death'" [Leviticus 20:9].

And addressed by Paul on two occasions:

**Ephesians 6:1** - Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

**v. 2** - Honor your father and mother ...

<sup>2</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 165.

<sup>3</sup> H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), 231.

**Colossians 3:20** - Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

In Luke 2:51, Jesus put Himself under submission to His parents continuously:

**Luke 2:51** - And He went down from the temple mount with them and came to Nazareth, and He placed Himself under subordination to them continually ... (CTL)

This is just one principle of the Mosaic Law that He was to fulfill without fail.

This idea of our Lord submitting Himself to the authority of sinful human beings is instructive yet baffling and the conundrum can only be resolved by understanding the uniqueness of our Lord's two natures and the doctrine of *kenōsis*.

We have recently studied the hypostatic union, so I will naïvely assume that you recall the principles of this doctrine. A review of the definition should suffice:

**Hypostatic union: In the Person of the incarnate Christ are two natures, divine and human, inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. Jesus is different from God and the Holy Spirit in that He is Man. He is different from true humanity in that He is God. As Man He is superior to man because He is perfect and impeccable.**