

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS



Christ to the World Ministries

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Artist: Ruth Bochte

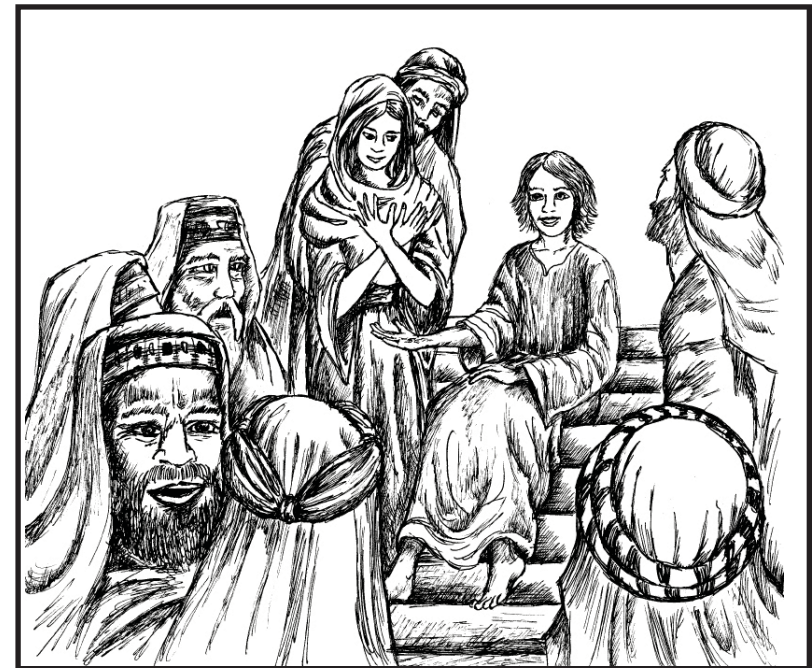
Writer: Mary Lee Gossett

Editorial Advisor: Dr. LeRoy Ford

Bible Editor: Dr. Lorin Cranford

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CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES

The Childhood of Jesus

Read Luke 2:21-52 and Matthew 2:1-23 in your Bible.

This study looks at the childhood of Jesus and follows him as he grew from an infant to age 12 when the Bible records his first words. You will become aware of the protective hand of God and of his guidance for those who listen.

Background

It all began with a baby boy born in Bethlehem of Judea; a baby born to show us what God is like and to be our redeemer. We celebrate this miraculous birth with songs and pageants at Christmas. The scene is complete with shepherds, three wise men, angels, along with Mary and Joseph. Such a scene is a synthesis of all events gathered into one wonderful picture.

The Biblical account, however, reminds us that all these events did not occur simultaneously. The Magi (Wise Men) came at a later time; in fact, when Jesus was about two years old.

The Babe

Let us take a look first at events that took place after Jesus' birth and follow them through his childhood. On the eighth day after his birth, the child was circumcised. This ritual symbolized the covenant God made with His people. At this ceremony, he was named Jesus (Luke 2:21). The Hebrew name for Jesus is Joshua, which means, "He will save."

Next we see baby Jesus in the arms of his mother, Mary, about a month later, as she and Joseph take him to the temple in Jerusalem for a consecration ceremony, as required by the Law of Moses. A very old man, Simeon, was in the temple that day. The Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he could see the Messiah. When he saw the baby Jesus, he said, "*Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people*" (Luke 2:29-31).

Anna, an old prophetess, also was in the temple. She had stayed there night and day for many years after her husband died. She prayed and fasted and waited for the Savior to come. When she saw the baby, she praised God and told everyone the Messiah had finally arrived.

The Visit of the Wise Men

Nearly two years later, Magi from the east came seeking Jesus. They had searched for the meaning of the star they saw at Jesus' birth. They believed it announced the birth of the King of the Jews. So they went to Jerusalem and asked, "*Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?*" (Matthew 2:2). King Herod was disturbed and called a meeting of the Jewish religious leaders to ask where the Messiah was to be born. He was told that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. The Old Testament prophet Micah had prophesied that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2). Herod sent for the Wise Men and asked the exact time they saw the star. He asked them to go to Bethlehem and find the child and report to him so that he, too, could worship the child-king.

Mary and Joseph must have been filled with wonder when one day Magi appeared bearing gifts for Jesus. After gold, frankincense and myrrh were presented to Jesus, the Wise Men left. They were warned in a dream not to return to Jerusalem and report to Herod.

King Herod gave orders to kill all boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. However, God protected his Son. In a dream, Joseph was warned by an angel to flee to Egypt and stay until the angel said to return. When Herod died, the family returned to Nazareth. Here Jesus would spend his childhood. We can only imagine what it was like. The Bible does not tell us.

The Growing Boy

At age five, boys attended Synagogue School where the scriptures were studied. In the schools the boys memorized the scripture texts and discussed their meaning with the teacher. At home they would also discuss the scriptures with their father. Quite interestingly, in a synagogue not five miles from Nazareth archaeological finds suggest that the Jewish boys learned Koine Greek and studied the classical Greek philosophers as well. They learned prayers and Hebrew, although many spoke Aramaic. They played in the open air with friends.

A boy learned a trade, almost always that of his father. As a child, Jesus, no doubt, followed Joseph as he went about his work as a carpenter. He didn't have far to walk, since Joseph's business was located in his home. Jewish peasant business operations in that world were always home-based businesses. Jesus must have had many questions as he grew.

The Twelve Year Old

Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem yearly for the Passover Feast. Jesus joined them. When he was 12, he went to the temple and startled the teachers and priests with his knowledge of the Scriptures.

After seven days of Passover celebration, Mary and Joseph started home. They assumed Jesus was with the other children, and did not miss him until evening. They hurried back to Jerusalem and searched for him. When they found him in the temple, Mary scolded, "*Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you*" (Luke 2:48).

Jesus gave a surprising answer. "*Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?*" (Luke 2:49). The Bible says that Jesus went home with them and was an obedient son. "*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*" (Luke 2:52). And so, Jesus grew to manhood in a traditional home where faithful parents taught him religious truths.

Conclusion

God used the boy, Jesus, and God can use you. He can change your life. Jesus can forgive your sins. He is the compassionate Savior who loves you with an everlasting love.

The Bible teaches that you are a sinner. But God loves you and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins. You receive Christ as your Savior by turning from your sins and placing your faith and trust in Him.

Pray this prayer: "*Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*"

Welcome to God's family! Share with others that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.