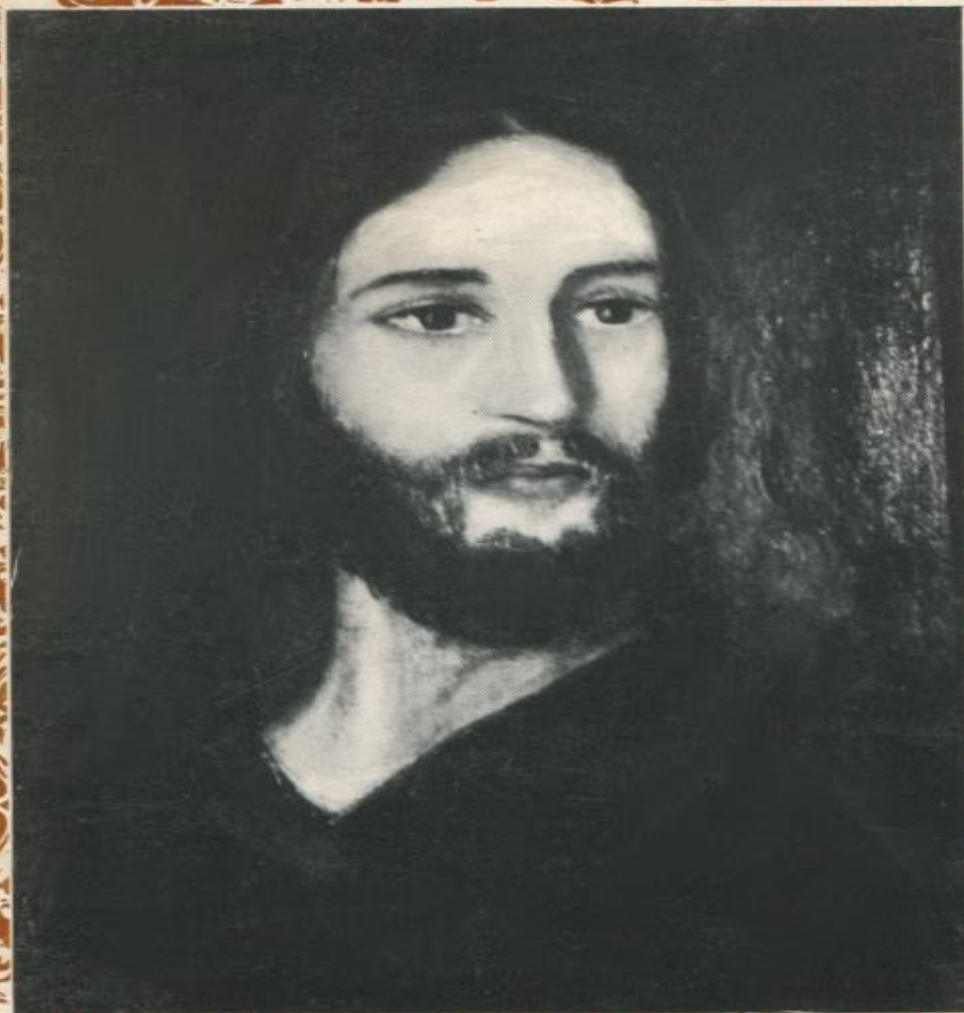


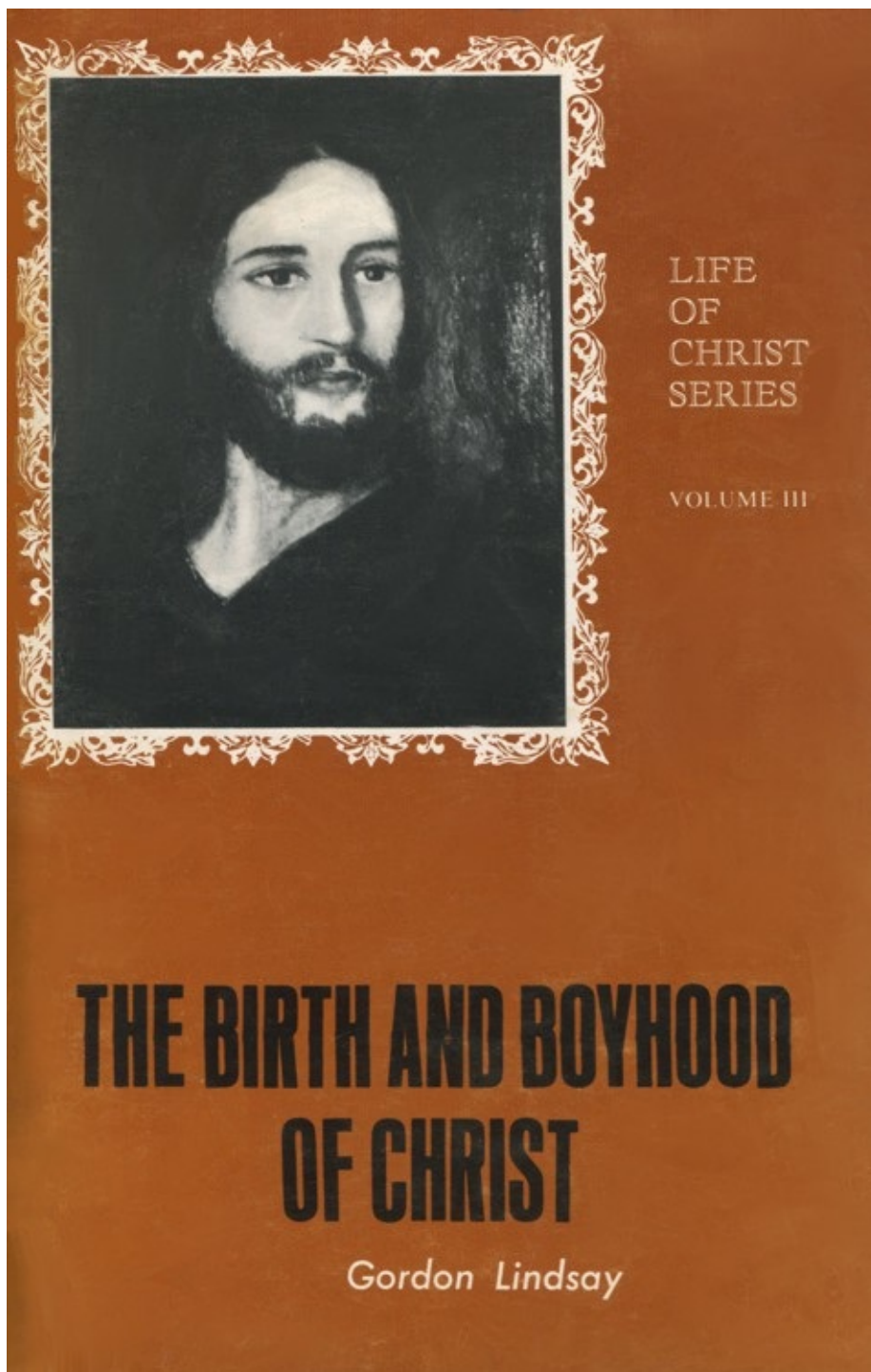


LIFE
OF
CHRIST
SERIES

VOLUME III

THE BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF CHRIST

Gordon Lindsay



THE BIRTH AND BOYHOOD OF CHRIST

Deep within the heart of every Christian is a longing to know more about the background of the life of Jesus and the

times in which He lived. It seems that every bit of new information brings us closer to Christ.

In this volume we show the conditions existing in the world at the time of Christ's birth, including the sad spiritual state of the nation Israel. We have gathered what information is available from secular sources about customs existing in the city of Nazareth in those days. We note the humble origin, the beautiful character, and the grace and exemplary conduct of Mary when she was tried under the most difficult circumstances. We sketch the character of her husband Joseph, a humble son of toil. We see him taking his wife to Bethlehem to register, and when he arrives, finds that Mary is ready to become a mother. He looks for but cannot find a single available room in the city of Bethlehem. Almost in despair he is forced to take her to a shelter where the animals share space with them. In the humble facilities of a manger the greatest event in the history of the world took place—the birth of Jesus Christ.

In this volume we give a background of the historical events which occurred in the world at that time. The book answers such questions as:

What woman in the Bible saw events unfold during the whole century before Christ's birth, and who dedicated her life to the work of praying for the coming of the Messiah?

What does history say about Herod who murdered the children of Bethlehem?

How did it happen that Joseph and Mary underwent the hardships of the trip to Bethlehem just before she was to give birth to the Christ child?

Was Christ born on December 25th?

What do the apocryphal gospels say about the boyhood of Christ? Are these stories credible?

Did Jesus go to school?

What events happened in Nazareth during the boyhood days of Christ?

What terrible and shocking catastrophe happened three miles from Nazareth during the time Christ lived there?

*The Birth and Boyhood
of Christ*

by Gordon Lindsay

Published by

CHRIST FOR THE NATIONS

Dallas, Texas

Reprinted 1977

All Rights Reserved

Contents

Chapter 1

[The World When Jesus Was Born.](#)7

Chapter II

[Mary, the Mother of Jesus.](#)13

Chapter III

[The Birth of Jesus.](#)21

Chapter IV

[The Boy Jesus.](#)31

Chapter V

[The Visit to Jerusalem.](#)39

Chapter 1

The World When Jesus Was Born

1

There was a remarkable woman in the city of Jerusalem by the name of Anna who lived in the days just before the coming of Christ (Luke 2:36-38). She stayed in the temple, and there she prayed night and day for her people. She had married in the year

91 B.C., but her husband had died seven years later. She with a few others like her had interceded to God continually with fastings for the Messiah to come. During her lifetime she had witnessed the world passing through great political convulsions. Rome was shaken again and again by bloody civil wars. Kingdoms rose and fell in her march to world power. In 63 B.C. Pompey invaded Palestine and besieged Jerusalem. Anna could well remember the awful day when the Roman army broke down the wall with battering rams. The battle had been fought on the Sabbath when many of the Jews refused to fight. The slaughter that had followed had been terrible. After breaking into the temple, Pompey went into the holy place where only the priest was supposed to go. Eleven years later another general by the name of Crassus entered the temple and plundered it again. Then came Julius Caesar. Caesar crossed the Rubicon and made himself master of Italy. Pompey, who had profaned the temple, fought desperately; but his army was crushed in the battle of Tapsus. Three years later it was Caesar's turn to meet his fate. He was assassinated in Rome on the Ides of March. More civil war followed, and Mark Antony came to power; but

he and his paramour, the ambitious and unscrupulous Cleopatra, lost the battle at Actium. Augustus Caesar was the victor. All these things took place in Anna's life time, but she prayed on. In time her prayers and those of others like her were to change the world more than all the armies of the Caesars.

7

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

During Augustus Caesar's reign, a man by the name of Herod had watched these events warily, and he was always careful to throw his lot on the winning side. As a reward for his services, Augustus made him king of Palestine. Ambitious and ruthless, he beautified Jerusalem and authorized the building of a new and magnificent temple. Anna could remember when the great edifice was far enough along that they could worship in it. From that time on, day and night, she was in the temple fasting and praying that the Messiah might come. Then one day she was prompted to go to that part of the temple where the priests were making ready the offerings for the people. The Spirit had witnessed to her that a certain child who was being presented in the temple was none other than the One who would bring redemption to Jerusalem. She went in and gave thanks to God

and told the people that it was He who would save Israel. At about the same time a man called Simeon had also received a similar revelation. After seeing the Babe and taking Him in his arms, he blessed God and said, **“Lord now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”** (Luke 2:29-30).

The State of the Nation Israel

With the appearance of the Messiah, an altogether new force came into the world. If we are to understand the impact of this epochal event, we must know something of the state of Israel at that time. Let us, therefore, take a brief view of those conditions existing in the nation within whose borders the life of the Messiah was to be passed.

As one reads through the Bible and passes from the Old Testament to the New, he may think that the people of Israel in Jesus' day were much the same as they were in the earlier period. But during the four centuries that elapsed after the days of Malachi, as great a change took place in Israel as ever occurred in the history of any nation. Even the language of the people had changed, as well as many of its customs and institutions.

The World When Jesus Was Born

Politically, Israel had passed through evil times. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah the nation had been organized as a sort of theocratic state. One conqueror after another had passed through the land, gradually but surely changing everything. The brave Maccabees had raised the battle cry of freedom, and for a certain period they had thrown off the yoke of the oppressor. However, within a century after the Maccabees the Jewish state had fallen completely under the sway of Rome.

The Herod dynasty which came to power a few years before Christ's birth held the nation under subjection. But shortly after Jesus was born, the country was divided into three parts. Galilee and Peraea were reigned over by vassal kings. Judea, after suffering the misrule of Archelaus, was ruled by a governor. The iron heel of Rome was now felt everywhere. Roman soldiers were stationed throughout the country. Roman standards waved over the nation's fortresses. Roman tax gatherers were in every town of any size.

The Sanhedrin, which was the supreme religious body of the nation, retained only a shadow of power, they being mere

puppets of Rome and subject to the caprice of the imperial rulers. Notwithstanding, religious and national patriotism burned with as fierce a passion as at any time in Israel's history. Religiously, the people were more orthodox than in any previous period. Prior to the Babylonian captivity, the nation had been cursed with idolatry. But the captivity had cured them of that. The priestly orders had since been reorganized, and the temple services and the annual feasts were regularly observed. Although Herod the Great had built a new temple in Jerusalem that rivaled that of Solomon, a new institution had sprung up which almost put the temple into the background—the synagogue. There were synagogues wherever the Jews worshipped in Israel, as well as throughout the civilized world. People filled the synagogues on Sabbath days. There they prayed, heard the Scriptures read, and listened to an exhortation of a rabbi. Schools of theology had sprung up in which rabbis were trained and the sacred books interpreted.

9

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

With all this activity true religion in Israel, nevertheless, greatly declined. Even during periods of apostasy in ancient

Israel, there had arisen great prophets who spoke to the conscience of the nation and maintained a contact with heaven. But for four hundred years no prophet had appeared in Israel. During this period, there had arisen several new religious sects, one of which was the Pharisees, who became champions of Jewish racial superiority. Characterized by an extreme narrowness and sectarianism, they were committed to legalism and externals. They despised and hated other races and came to look upon themselves as the special favorites of heaven, simply because they were descendants of Abraham.

There were the scribes who were associated with the Pharisees and who devoted their lives to copying the Scriptures. They professed great reverence for the Scriptures, counting every word and letter in them. However, their interpretation of the Old Testament was entirely legalistic, and much that was spiritual and noble in it they passed by.

The rabbis added their mass of opinions to the Scriptures, and in the course of time the scribes came to regard these traditions as being as authoritative as the Holy Writings themselves. The multiplication of interpretations finally reached such proportions as to regulate every detail of human life—

personal, domestic, and social. The learning of a scribe consisted of memorizing a vast number of these opinions. It was these traditions that the scribes taught the people in the synagogues which became such a burden that the people were unable to bear it. The spiritual and moral issues were forgotten as rituals and ceremonies multiplied and proliferated.

The Sadducees were the “modernists” of their day. They rejected the authority of tradition, but their protest was merely negative. They had nothing to offer in the place of the traditions. They were a worldly group of men, many of whom were wealthy. They ridiculed the exclusiveness of the Pharisees, but at the same time they had lost all faith in that which had once been the hope of the nation. They did not believe in miracles or

10

The World When Jesus Was Born

angels. The Sadducees were entirely materialistic in their thinking and even denied the resurrection. They can best be described as a worldly sophisticated group with a superficial veneer of religion who reflected Greek culture and enjoyed foreign amusements. They worshipped wealth and worldly position. One special section of the Sadducees flattered Herod;

they sought his favor and were for that reason called Herodians. Outside the pale of these religious parties were the masses of the lower social scale—the publicans, harlots, and sinners—the flotsam and jetsam of humanity for whose souls no man cared. These were the people that God had once called the children of Abraham. These were the people to whom the Messiah had been promised. There were still some among them who cherished the hope of the consolation of Israel. There were those such as Anna and Simeon who prayed night and day with fastings and tears that the Lord might come and redeem His people from their sins.

11

Chapter II

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

2

As the mother of Jesus, Mary stands apart from all other women. No other in history has ever been so honored. Both the angel Gabriel and Mary's cousin Elizabeth said to her, **“Blessed art thou among women”** (Luke 1:28, 42). To get the true picture of Mary, we must escape the legend and fancy of centuries and confine our attention to what the Scriptures

actually say about her.

Mary had a humble beginning. She was an obscure peasant girl living in the village of Nazareth of a poor family, although of the royal Davidic line. She seemed to be of a retiring nature, reticent, and shrinking from public view.

When we first see Mary, she is a young girl having scarcely crossed the threshold of womanhood. Marriage was early in the East; and a Jewish maiden just betrothed could hardly have been out of her teens. To this young woman, born in a peasant's home, accustomed to the little round of domestic duties and completely ignorant of the world and its ways, came a startling and overwhelming revelation.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. (Luke 1:26- 29)

The first thoughts of Mary could only have been those of bewilderment and dismay. First the appearance of the archangel which in itself would have startled anyone—and then his message of expectant virgin motherhood must have astonished

13

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

her beyond measure. But she managed to recover her composure and bowing in submission to the angel listened to what he had to say:

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath

also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, behold the hand maid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:30-38)

It is the artists rather than the theologians who have tried to convey to us the feeling of the Nazarene maiden at the time of the annunciation. Rosselli shows Mary shrinking from the angel, almost cowering at his feet, but not because she is dazzled by coming into the presence of so great a personage, for she keeps her eyes upon him in a steadfast gaze. The dark eyes have in them the terror of the hunted deer. It is his overwhelming message, not Gabriel, that smites her with alarm.

Mary recovered herself, and in humble self-possession answered the angel with simple dignity. She did not say as Zacharias did, **“Whereby shall I know this?”** , but rather, **“How shall this be?”** The first statement was one of unbelief, but Mary took the words of the angel for granted. She only inquired how the event would come about.

The angel informed Mary that the conception would occur by the power of the Holy Ghost who would overshadow her, and

that the child that was to be born would be called the Son of

14

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

God. In humble submission the young maiden said, **“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”**

(Luke 1:38).

We are then told that **“Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, unto a city of Juda”** (Luke 1:39). What was the reason for this haste in departure? Was her mother a person that she could not confide in? Or was Mary already an orphan? Since the Scriptures are silent on this point, we cannot be sure. But the fact that Mary left “in haste” is significant. It was important to her that she should have time to ponder the meaning of her strange experience and adjust herself to it. It would seem that there was no one in Nazareth in whom she could fully confide. Moreover, women have a way of quickly discovering when another woman is with child.

Although betrothed to Joseph, she did not feel that the subject was one that she could tell him about at that particular time.

The angel Gabriel had mentioned that her cousin Elisabeth had **“conceived a son in her old age.”** Mary apparently felt that

a visit to Elisabeth's home at that time would provide her with wisdom and counsel for the events that were to come. She made the trip southward to the home which was located in the hill country not far from Jerusalem.

The warm welcome she received at the household of Elisabeth and Zacharias was reassuring. Even as Mary entered the house and gave her salutation, her cousin was filled with the Holy Ghost. Elisabeth began to prophesy, speaking of Mary as the **“mother of my Lord.”**

And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. (Luke 1:42-45)

The words of Elisabeth spoken under the Holy Spirit were

15

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

just the encouragement that Mary needed at the time. Following

Elisabeth's prophecy, Mary spoke in the Spirit the beautiful Magnificat:

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. (Luke 1:46-55)

These Scriptures are Mary's hymn of praise to God, and they showed that apart from being the mother of the Lord, Mary was a prophetess in her own right. This jubilant song pouring from her lips revealed Mary's wonderful breadth of spiritual experience. Her words remind us of the song of Hannah, but as

the mother of the Lord her song reaches even more sublime heights.

Mary found in Elisabeth a true mother in Israel. They spent many a holy hour together, discussing the tremendous significance of the events that had come into their lives.

Zacharias sat near them with sealed lips, mute evidence of the goodness and severity of God. (Luke 1:18-23). From time to time he would send them a note from his writing table, informing them of things he had discovered from the prophecies and the Messianic psalms.

The three happy months spent in Elisabeth's home came to an end all too soon. Perhaps Mary remained until Elisabeth's child was born, for the three months added to the six would have completed Elisabeth's time. If so, Mary left immediately after that event and returned to Nazareth.

16

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Mary, although a pure virgin, was soon to face the problem that a young unmarried girl does when she becomes pregnant. She could not keep the news from others for long. With natural delicacy and reserve, she hesitated to say anything. Indeed how

could Mary reveal to a suspicious world, or even to Joseph, an experience that must have seemed utterly impossible?

And then came that awful day when Joseph became aware of her condition, and though he may have said nothing, she knew he doubted her. Or she may have told him her story, but how could he believe it? Despite her great faith, that night must have been dark indeed with only the light of her knowledge that she was pure and innocent of any wrong.

It must have been a black night also for Joseph. There is evidence that he was much older than Mary, and she was his first real love. His discovery could only have left him crushed and bewildered. Yet, despite his grief, his thoughts were on how he could help the poor girl in the hour of shame that seemed to be upon her.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. (Matt. 1:19)

To Joseph there seemed only one thing left to do—to make some arrangement whereby Mary could be sent away from the village to have her baby and thus be spared the humiliation and embarrassment of bearing the child in Nazareth. But God had

not forgotten Mary, the holy virgin, for the child she was to bear was the very Son of God. At that fateful moment, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said,

Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee

Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the

Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt

call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their

sins. (Matt. 1:20-21)

When dawn came, what a morning it must have been for

both Joseph and Mary! Joseph was at her door, his face beaming

17

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

with joy and reassurance to tell her he knew all, and that all was well.

There are some who have exalted Mary above her position.

Others have reckoned her only as common and ordinary. Neither

view is correct. Mary was a person not lacking in energy and

strong character. She possessed the gifts and graces that make

for womanly greatness. Because some have exalted her beyond

her place, we must not allow this to keep us from granting her

full due. The record of her in the Scriptures, even though

relatively brief, shows her to be a woman of unusual spiritual depth and piety. The fact that she conducted herself well in the presence of the angel showed her to be a person of courage and nobility of spirit.

Faith was a great element in Mary's character. If it is hard for some to believe in the Incarnation, it would have been far more difficult for her. Yet she believed it with all that was within her. Jesus Himself said that no mighty work could be done where there was unbelief (Mark 6:5-6). Therefore, her faith must have had a part in the great miracle of the Incarnation. It was the greatest of all miracles performed in the history of the human race. So it was for her as Elisabeth had said, **"Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord"** (Luke 1:45).

Mary's humility is another of her striking virtues which manifested itself, not so much in self-depreciation, as in an utter forgetfulness of self. She did not seem to think of herself as either worthy or unworthy. Her soul was lifted away from herself, and she thought of God only.

Standing at the forefront of Mary's greatness was her purity as is revealed in the Magnificat. There is no confession, but a

wonderful joy. Only the pure heart rejoices when God is near.

Mary's life was filled with mysteries that were beyond her.

Yet she never ceased to ponder them as she waited their unfolding. When possible she was nearby to watch the developments in her son's ministry. She witnessed the soul-piercing scenes of the crucifixion. She shared in the first

18

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

revelations on the resurrection morn. She waited with the 120 in the Upper Room. She with the others received the blessed baptism of the Spirit.

There was a patience in Mary in her long years of waiting.

After the birth of her child, there were no more angel choirs, strange stars, or miraculous escapes. No pilgrims came to Nazareth to search Him out; no kings came to do Him obeisance.

Silence fell on the scene as thirty years came and went. What were Mary's thoughts in those days? Through all those years she pondered in her heart the things that the angel had spoken. She never doubted. And when the day of His ministry began, she turned to those who were serving and said, **"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."**

Chapter III

The Birth of Jesus

3

Mary, according to the genealogy given in Luke, was the daughter of a man by the name of Heli. The family was poor, though we may assume that their standard of living was not much different from that of their neighbors. They came from a devout stock. Mary and Elisabeth were cousins, although we do not know that they were first cousins. It is hardly possible because of the differences in their ages that their fathers were brothers.

On each Sabbath day Mary went with her parents to the synagogue to listen to the Scriptures. She little realized at the time that certain of those Scriptures referred to her personally (Isa. 7:14). She did not quickly forget what she had heard (Luke 2:51). We do not have a record of what kind of education Mary received, though probably it was little. Nevertheless, her song in Luke 1:46-55 indicates that she was by no means unlearned.

What kind of man was Joseph? As far as the record shows, he was only a humble carpenter, probably much older than

Mary, but the Scriptures describe him as a **“just man.”** Like his ancestor Joseph, after whom he was named, he too seemed to have a special gift of dreams. Several times the revelations he received in dreams gave him information of the utmost importance.

Where did Mary first meet Joseph? Was it at the spring in Nazareth where she went to draw water? Or did she first meet him at the carpenter’s shop? No doubt she admired his skill as a craftsman, and on that day her parents told her that Joseph had asked for her hand, her face probably lit up with joy. We can see Joseph bringing some gift which he had fashioned in the carpenter’s shop. From that time Mary began making simple preparations for her wedding. Then began the strange events that

21

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

were to change her life completely—events that almost tore her heart apart, but which in the providence of God had a happy ending.

In the city of Rome on the great throne sat Augustus Caesar, the ruler of an empire that was more vast than any the world had ever known. It might be supposed that this powerful figure was

complacent in his victory in the great power struggle for control of the world. But actually he was puzzling over the problem of financing his unwieldy kingdom. The cost of maintaining the army and his far-flung administration required great sums of money. Many provinces were paying tribute, but Palestine was among those that were not. The emperor decided that each country must share its part of the burden. So it was that Augustus set the wheels in motion for carrying out his plan of universal taxation. This decree went down from one official to another until eventually the news reached the ears of Joseph and Mary. They realized that they immediately would have to go to the city of their ancestors, despite the fact that Mary was far advanced in pregnancy.

It was a familiar road, for Mary had returned on the route just six months before from her visit to Elisabeth. She was seated on the back of a donkey; and with Joseph leading, they began their trip down the road that led to the plain of Esdraelon. Not all the people on the route were friendly. While passing through Samaria, no hospitality was offered them. At Shechem they saw Ebal and Gerizim, the mountains of curse and blessing where the Samaritans worshipped. Perhaps they stopped and

refreshed themselves at the well of Sychar, the one that Jacob dug. Then they went on, passing Shiloh, Gibeon, and Bethel. At last as they drew near Jerusalem, the magnificent temple burst into view. Though it was still in the process of building, the outer courts shone with a dazzling whiteness.

It was an unforgettable experience to visit Jerusalem, but they were not yet at their destination. Bethlehem was still five miles away. Within an hour after leaving the outskirts of Jerusalem, they were in view of the city. In another half hour,

22

The Birth of Jesus

they were passing the tomb of Rachel, and then finally they entered the city. They had been frugally saving their money, so that they could hire a room at the inn. But alas, they found that many visitors were there ahead of them for the same purpose.

Every spare room was taken. Joseph, almost in despair, at last found a manger which the innkeeper permitted them to use. The best that Mary could have was a rug and a little covering thrown over the straw. And thus the humble couple who would some day be the world's most famous family laid down to rest.

Some time in the night Joseph may have awakened. If so, he

probably saw a star shining more brightly than all the rest, and it seemed to be hanging over the stable. His rest was soon to be broken again. Mary was not sleeping. She was in severe pain. The pangs of childbirth were upon her. What pitiful circumstances these were in which a mother should have to give birth to a child! Bravely Mary faced the situation, and despite all the discomforts the child was brought safely to birth with Joseph's poor help. Who could believe that in that humble surrounding the greatest event of history had just taken place!

Was Christ Born in the Winter?

The traditional date of the birth of Christ is December 25, but of course the Bible does not say this and the evidence is against its being at this time. Jerusalem and Bethlehem are at an altitude of 2500 feet. Snow often falls in this area. The winters were severe enough for Christ to have warned the Jews who were to flee the Romans when they surrounded Jerusalem to pray **“that your flight be not in winter”** (Matt. 24:15-22). The weather at that time of the year would have been very severe for a prospective mother to travel the long distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The child Jesus was born in an open manger, and it must be noted that the shepherds were on their own volition out

in an open field. It was not customary for shepherds to be out with flocks at night in the winter. Historical evidence indicates that Christ was born in October.

23

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

The Visit of the Angels

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:8-14)

The visit of the angels to the humble shepherds was an interesting event, but it may be asked, Why did the angels not

appear instead to the priests at Jerusalem who sat in Moses' seat? The priests indeed were informed of the event, but they were not interested enough to make the journey of five miles to Bethlehem to find out for themselves (Matt. 2:4-5). Why did the angels appear to the shepherds? Undoubtedly the shepherds, like Simeon, were among those who were watching for the consolation of Israel. In the quietness of their occupation they had time to meditate and prepare their hearts for the great event. Nevertheless, the effect of the sudden heavenly visitation was to make them **"sore afraid."**

After the angels had gone back to heaven,

The shepherds said one to another, Let us now even go into Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. (Luke 2:15-16).

They of course told the remarkable story of the visitation to Mary and Joseph. We are sure for many a day to come they were to repeat the story to any and all who would care to listen.

The Poverty of Christ

The Scriptures tell us that He who was rich became poor that we might through His poverty become rich. By our standards today the family of Jesus was poor indeed, although probably not much poorer than the average family of Nazareth. One incident occurred in the temple which gives us a glimpse of Joseph's financial condition. When it came time for the circumcision of the child, the Law required that the parents bring a lamb and offer it for an atonement. But the Scriptures taking due notice of the exigencies of the poor added, **“And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons”** (Lev. 12:6-8). The poverty of the family of Jesus is thus evident. The devoted couple would have certainly brought a lamb had their means permitted. The most they could afford was two turtledoves.

By reason of their limited finances they could have scarcely made their way to Egypt to escape from Herod. Only because in the providence of God the Wise Men had brought gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh, were they able to make the trip.

The Visit of the Wise Men

When they heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the

star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
(Matt. 2:9-10)

The Wise Men and the Star of the East are inseparably associated with the birth of Christ. What was this Star of Bethlehem? The verses above indicate that the Wise Men saw the star at different times—first in their homeland in the East and then later after they left Jerusalem on they way to Bethlehem. Since Christ was born in 4 B.C., the Wise Men saw the star at least two years earlier according to Verse 16. This would mean that the date that they first saw it was 6 B.C., or perhaps late 7 B.C.

25

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

Was this star a comet with its bright tail sweeping across the sky? Comets have always made a deep impression upon men's minds. They were believed to portend special events. It would not be surprising that men of that day would consider an especially brilliant comet as presaging some extraordinary event. Comets, however, do not linger long in the sky. Drawn by the

powerful attraction of the Sun, a comet revolves around that massive body, and then after gathering great momentum, it swings out into space. It would not have reappeared two years later.

History records a brilliant comet in 44 B.C., just before the Ides of March when Caesar was assassinated. Another appeared in 66 A.D., just before the Christians fled to Pella to escape the siege of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans. Halley's comet appeared in 12 B.C. and is described in great detail by Chinese astronomers. This, however, is too early to be associated with the birth of Christ in 4 B.C.

Astronomers inform us, however, that there was a conjunction of planets at about this time. Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus came so close together in the year 7 B.C. that "they appeared as one." But such a planetary configuration lasts only a few days. Matthew 2:9 declares that "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." This wording would indicate that the star actually appeared to change its position as they travelled from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, much as the Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire arose from the tabernacle and went before the

children of Israel.

And who were the Wise Men, or Magi, as they are sometimes called? They were a priestly class from a region of Persia, who specialized in interpreting dreams and supernatural visitations. It is hardly possible that they were Jews since they did not seem to be familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. When they reached Jerusalem, they went to the temple priests to inquire where Christ the King was to be born. The Wise Men were typical of the great multitude of Gentiles who were to

26

The Birth of Jesus

believe on Him.

It is strange that the Wise Men of the East should travel all the way to Bethlehem to see the newborn babe, while the scribes and chief priests in Jerusalem only five miles away who knew where He was to be born, did not bother to investigate the report of His birth.

There was one person, however, who took their quest seriously. This was none other than Herod the king. Slowly dying in his bed, he hoped to perpetuate his dynasty and would stop at no cruelty to accomplish his purpose. To maintain his

grip over the country, Herod had spies stationed everywhere to bring him news of anything that might jeopardize his interests. When word of the Magi's arrival came to him, he sent for the scribes and the priests to learn where Christ was to be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the Princes of Judea: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. (Matt. 2:5-6)

Having obtained this information, he called for the Wise Men. He told them he knew where the King of the Jews was to be born. They were to go to Bethlehem and search out diligently where the child was. Then craftily he asked them to return and give him the information as to where the child was so that he might also worship Him.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. (Matt. 2:7-8)

The Magi turned and left the palace of Herod. They took their gifts they had brought from Persia and mounted their beasts for the short trip from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The Star they had seen in the East went before them and led them directly to the place where the child was.

27

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

By this time Joseph had found a house. Mary was no longer occupying a stable. And when the Wise Men came in, they fell down on the floor and worshipped the Babe. Then they took their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and laid them at His feet.

But as they were ready to return to Jerusalem, one of them was visited by a dream which warned them not to return to Herod, and they departed down the valley east of Bethlehem and returned to their country another way.

Naturally the Wise Men conveyed knowledge of their warning to Joseph and Mary. While Joseph was pondering this strange matter, he too had a dream. In the vision he received a warning to take the child and His mother and flee at once from Herod and go down to Egypt. There was no time to be lost.

Herod had a fortress palace close to Bethlehem, and at any hour the word might go out to slay the child. Joseph knew enough about Herod that as soon as he discovered that he had been mocked by the Wise Men, his fury would know no bounds. In the dead of night Joseph sat Mary and the child upon the back of the animal and they began the trek south to Egypt. By morning light they would not be far from the valley of Elah where Mary's ancestor David once fought the giant Goliath. It was not easy for Mary to hold the child in her arms hour after hour all through the night, but it had to be done. Every mile brought them closer to safety. By the time they reached Beersheba, they had put danger well behind them.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem, Herod waited impatiently for the return of the Wise Men. At last a messenger brought him the disconcerting news that the Wise Men had defied his command and returned to their country by another way. Filled with rage, Herod determined on a fiendish act which was in keeping with his cruel spirit. His officers were to go to Bethlehem and slay all the children in that part of the country from two years old and under. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah:

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and

weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her

28

The Birth of Jesus

children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. (Matt. 2:18)

This is a remarkable prophecy, and it refers to Rachel, Jacob's wife. In her earlier years of marriage she had been barren and had once cried out to Jacob, **"Give me children, or else I die"** (Gen. 30:1). At length her prayer to God was heard, and she gave birth to Joseph and later to Benjamin. Rachel's passionate love for children seemed to project itself down the ages to her descendants, and so it is said that the cry of mourning over the slaughter of the innocents is spoken of as **"Rachel weeping for her children, and could not be comforted because they were not."**

It was one of the last acts of the wicked Herod. To the very end of his life, the fiendish cruelty of his nature could not be satisfied. He ordered fires to be kindled in Jerusalem, and forty-two students were consigned to the flames. About the same time he wrote a letter to his son Antipas, asking him to come home. When the boy arrived, Herod made terrible accusations against

him. After putting him in prison, he sent word for him to be put to death. As Herod's death drew near, spies came and told him that the people were rejoicing. Furious over this, he gave a command that when he died soldiers were to kill all who rejoiced at his death—a command that was never carried out. The agonies of the dying king were beyond description. Finally when he died, the people breathed a sigh of relief.

Archelaus Reigns, and Joseph and Mary

Return to Israel

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:

29

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. (Matt. 2:19-22)

Herod, altogether, had made four wills. At his death, Archelaus was chosen as king of Judah, while the other sons, Herod Antipas and the half-brother Philip, inherited other provinces of the kingdom. All this, of course, had to be ratified by Emperor Augustus. But even before Archelaus could get away to Rome, violent demonstrations broke out in Jerusalem with the rioters demanding special concessions from Archelaus. The ringleaders of the mob were captured and burned alive. Joseph and Mary of course did not intend to remain in Egypt. As soon as the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, assuring him that Herod was dead, he made the decision to return.

When the family had crossed the desert and began to climb the hills of Judea, Joseph received word of further events occurring in Judea. He heard the terrible news that thousands of pilgrims who had gone to the city had been massacred by the soldiers.

It did not appear safe to pass through the land. When he learned that Archelaus was king over Galilee, he decided to follow the road that went up the lowlands and around Mt. Carmel. From there he crossed the Plain of Esdraelon to

Nazareth where their former home had been.

30

Chapter IV

The Boy Jesus

4

The city of Nazareth was to be the home of Jesus until He was thirty years of age. Writers of the life of Christ generally deplore the fact that so little is recorded about His youthful days. There was, however, a reason for this. The early life of Jesus was divinely intended to be little different from that of any other boy in Israel. Although it is probable that people recognized that Jesus was an unusual child, it was certainly furthest from their thoughts that the youth who dwelt in their midst was the very Son of God, whose impact on the world would be greater than any other person who ever lived.

The inhabitants of Nazareth may have noticed that although all children at times are given to misbehaving, yet they could never recall Jesus' acting improperly. Those who were especially close to the family probably observed His devotion to Mary and Joseph. Others perhaps marked His unusual interest in the Scriptures. Yet, He made mistakes that any boy makes, such

as missing the party when they began the trip back to Nazareth.

It seems probable that Jesus grew up in Nazareth without attracting any extraordinary attention.

The Apocryphal Gospels

Although the gospels have little to say about the boyhood of Jesus, some of the apocryphal New Testament gospels profess to push back the curtain of mystery that shrouds this period of His life. It is natural that where God is silent, the curiosity of man should attempt to fill in the blanks. In the days of Paul there were evidently those who sought to delve into the early life of Jesus. The apostle cautioned against too much zeal in this saying, **“Yet, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth we know him no more”** (II Cor. 5:16). It

31

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

was His ministry and message that were significant, not His boyhood days.

The apocryphal gospel of Thomas records a number of miracles that were supposed to have transpired during Jesus' childhood. These are nothing but fabrications, and poor ones at that. Not a single historian considers them anything but fiction.

These fables only show how unequal the imagination of man is to such a task. The stories are crude caricatures in comparison to the majestic narratives of the four gospels. They make Jesus a worker of frivolous and useless marvels. According to these apocryphal stories, Jesus made birds of clay and caused them to fly. He was supposed to have raised a boy from the dead to prove he was innocent of a crime. He changed playmates into animals. In short, the apocryphal gospels are compilations of mere chaff and some of the tales are not only incredible but tinge on the blasphemous.

Such miserable concoctions of fantasy warn us to stay clear of trying to peer too far into the hallowed enclosure of His early life. It was the purpose of God that Jesus should grow up quietly in an obscure village and draw to Himself no special attention.

We are told that He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man, thus passing through all the stages of normal development.

As for the miracles which were supposed to have been performed during His boyhood, the gospel of John specifically tells us that the first miracle of Christ was that of turning the water into wine (John 2:11).

Childhood Experiences

Despite the lack of specific information in the Scriptural account, we can reconstruct in general outline the scenes of Christ's boyhood from our historical knowledge of the times.

It is probable that when Joseph and Mary departed from their home in Nazareth to go to Bethlehem, they left their house in the hands of relatives, possibly in the care of Mary's father.

32

The Boy Jesus

Perhaps they thought at the time that they might establish their home in Bethlehem where the child as He grew would have special educational opportunities afforded those who lived near Jerusalem. Subsequent developments which involved Herod's murderous decree to slay the children of Bethlehem and the oppression of the people by Archelaus changed any such plans if they existed. The decision was made to go back to their quiet home in Nazareth after they learned of Herod's death.

The family home, if it were similar to others in the city, was made of stone. It probably had a flat roof supported by rough hewn beams. Steps outside led to the roof which served as additional space for the family.

When Joseph and Mary began housekeeping in Nazareth, Jesus was probably only a toddling child, just old enough to accompany His mother when she went to the village spring for water. Each day Mary went to this fountain several times. She filled her jar with water, and then balancing it on her head, she returned home.

Outside the house there probably was a stone mill. One millstone revolved above another. Grain was poured in a hole in the center of the top stone. As the stone turned, the kernels were crushed into flour. The flour was gathered into a vessel, mixed with water and a little leaven until it became dough. The mixture was set aside until the bread had risen.

In another part of the courtyard was a large oven made of baked mud and clay. Into the oven Mary thrust a layer of grass, shrubs, and small sticks. When the fuel was set afire and consumed, the gray ash which was left was raked away. Then Mary took the dough, patted it into the shape of pancakes and laid the cakes on the hot stones at the bottom of the oven. A lid was placed over the oven. When the bread was baked, it was eaten with cheese, olives, dates, and honey—commodities common in that country.

By our standards today, the family of Jesus was poor indeed. However, Joseph and Mary were probably neither richer nor poorer than the average family of the village.

33

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

As Jesus grew up in Nazareth, He was alert to all that was happening around Him. He watched the children as they played in the market place (Luke 7:32). He observed the corn merchant and the customers as they haggled over prices. He noticed the flowers, the trees, the sparrow that fell to the ground, and the foxes in their dens. He heard the shepherd call the sheep by their names (John 10:3). He learned the lore of the weather (Matt. 16:2-3). He watched the vine dresser as he pruned the branches of the vine, so that it would bear more fruit (John 15:1-2). All these things He saw, remembered, and used as illustrations when He began His ministry of teaching.

The Home of Jesus

The home of Jesus was a godly one. Joseph was a righteous and just man, although probably considered a peasant by the upper classes. He performed his tasks faithfully in the carpenter's shop and acquitted himself as an honest son of toil,

supporting his large family to the best of his ability. As Jesus and each of His brothers grew older, they undoubtedly joined Joseph in the shop to help in the task of providing for the family. As we have seen Mary was a superior person. She was certainly a woman of faith as was shown by her beautiful response to the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:38). She showed a knowledge of the Scriptures, possessed poetic genius, yet was an exquisitely humble woman. She was keenly conscious of the great and utterly unexpected honor that had been conferred upon her as mother of the Messiah.

Despite her large family, she no doubt took special time to teach the children all she knew about spiritual things. The Great Secret she kept in her heart spurred her to do everything possible for her Firstborn. In return we know He was devoted to her, and even during the last hours of His life He was thinking of her welfare and making provision for her. While He suffered on the cross, He told John His disciple that he was to be a son to her. Outside of her home, however, Mary was reticent and said little about these matters. We are told that **“His mother kept all**

these sayings within her heart” (Luke 2:51).

The Synagogue School

About the age of eight Jesus was sent to the teacher of the synagogue who taught the children from the sacred rolls of the Scriptures. The teacher would write Aramaic letters in the sand with a pointed stick, and the students sitting down cross-legged repeated together the letters that were spelled out. The teacher also read to the boys stories of the Bible characters, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Jesus listened to these stories with rapt attention. He let nothing that was read from the Scriptures fall to the ground.

On the day before the Sabbath, Joseph put away his saw, his chisel, and his hammer, and as night came on, the men of the village went to the synagogue. On the following morning, the boys and girls attended special services. The ruler of the synagogue usually appointed someone to read the Scriptures. Anyone who could read was qualified to take his turn at this task. The cylinder that contained the sacred scroll was brought out and unrolled. Then the one appointed chose a certain portion of the Scriptures to read to the congregation.

When the Scriptures were read Jesus took the greatest

interest. While other boys might have thought that the sessions were sometimes dull, Jesus eagerly gave attention to them. It was during these hidden years at Nazareth that His mind became richly endowed with the knowledge of the Old Testament. It appears from Luke 4:16 that the reading ability of Jesus as He became older was so superior that it fell to Him on numerous occasions to perform his task. **“And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read.”**

The Feasts of Israel

There was another activity in which Jesus participated that must have had an unusual interest for Him—the annual feasts of

35

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

Israel.

The Jews of this period were very faithful in the observance of these feasts. One of these was the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, or the Feast of Lights. This occurred during the winter time. People lit their lamps, and the young men marched down the streets with blazing torches. On the following day they went to the synagogue and sang joyful songs. The people

recounted the stirring stories of the great hero, Judas Maccabeus, who vanquished Israel's enemies and purified the temple. The temple once had been defiled by the wicked Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Jews celebrated its purification by this eight-day Feast of Dedication.

There were other festivals, including the Feast of Purim, in which they remembered how Queen Esther overthrew the wicked Haman who plotted to destroy the Jews from the face of the earth. During this feast, the story of Esther was read from a scroll in the synagogue.

Then of course, there was the greatest of all feasts, the Passover. This feast was held each year at about the same time as our Easter. Many pilgrims went to Jerusalem to celebrate this notable event. Those who remained home ate the Passover feast in their houses with unleavened bread. Following the Passover was the feast of Pentecost, a little over a month later. Finally in the fall was the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. People left their houses and camped out in the open under the branches of trees. This was something a small boy would relish. And so these various feasts in which the people celebrated the goodness of God were important events in the lives of the people of Israel. It

was a time when parents would teach their children about God and about His peculiar dealings with their nation. We may be sure that the Boy Jesus gave all these occasions His most thoughtful attention. Each of these feasts had a meaning to Him, and He let nothing get past Him.

The Rebellion of Judas

When Jesus was about ten years of age, news reached

36

The Boy Jesus

Nazareth that Archelaus had been removed by Augustus as king of Judea. Archelaus had apparently inherited the worst traits of his father Herod, and at the same time he lacked his political finesse. Having little interest in trying to help the impoverished subjects of his kingdom, Archelaus embarked on an extravagant building program. He divorced his wife and married his brother's spouse. At last the news of his misgovernment reached the ears of the Emperor Augustus. The emperor had Archelaus recalled to Rome and then exiled to Vienne where he died a few years later. Augustus decided he no longer would have a king over Judea, but a governor. Thus it was at the trial of Jesus that Pilate the governor ruled instead of a king.

The year following the removal of Archelaus there was a rebellion in Galilee. News had come to Nazareth and other Galilean cities that the Roman government had ordered a census taken. Great anger was aroused among the Galileans. In every town and village young nationalist patriots arose and gathered in groups to curse Rome and swear revolt. In the neighboring town, Sepphoris, only three miles from Nazareth, a man by the name of Judas raised the standard of revolt (Acts 5:37). Young men throughout Galilee poured into the city to gather around Judas. They shouted the cry of war and vowed to give their lives to free the Jews from the Roman yoke. Ten thousand of them marched across the land to Tiberias, the new city where Herod's palace was soon to be built, and after overpowering the guards broke into the armory and appropriated the spears, swords, and shields. Then they went out to face the Romans.

The news of the revolt quickly reached the ears of Varus, who commanded the Roman legions in the hills above Gadara. His veterans marched against the undisciplined mob that Judas had gathered. There could only be one result. The raw Galilean recruits broke and fled. Then Varus went to Sepphoris and set fire to the town. That night every person in Nazareth went to the

summit of the hill to see the whole city of Sepphoris going up in flames. By morning nothing was left but a smoldering ruin. The people of the city were driven like cattle to the sea coast. There they were forced to board ships to be taken to the slave markets.

37

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

Two thousand of the young prisoners were crucified on crosses. But the saddened Jews that survived hoped on. Some day the Messiah would come, and He would drive out the hated Romans and set up the kingdom of God on earth. But the boy Jesus who even then was learning what the prophets had taught knew that freeing the land of the Romans was not the Messiah's first task. Even then He must have been thinking of the possibility of the cross. Soon He would have His first opportunity to go to Jerusalem, and there learn from the teachers of the temple more about the hopes and aspirations of His countrymen.

38

Chapter V

The Visit to Jerusalem

5

In the days of Jesus the thirteenth birthday of a Jewish boy

marked a great milestone in his life. He then became “a son of the Law.” At that age the responsibility for the keeping of the Law shifted from his father to him. He stepped over the threshold into a new world. It was the greatest day in his life. When a boy reached thirteen years of age, it was customary for pious parents to take him with them to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. In the case of Jesus who was probably born in October, his twelfth birthday had occurred about six months before the Passover. Although not yet thirteen, He was allowed to go with Joseph and Mary.

Ever since the crescent of the new moon had appeared in the western sky, there was great activity in Nazareth. Pilgrims were making preparations for the journey to Jerusalem before the full moon of the Passover came. Joseph and Mary, like many others, were getting ready for the journey. The donkey besides carrying Mary also bore sleeping mats and the food that was needed.

The journey to Jerusalem was a long trip for a boy of twelve, but we may be sure that Jesus looked forward to it.

Despite the artists who tend to make the boy Jesus appear weak and frail, He must have been of a strong constitution. During His ministry, He constantly made long trips from one part of the

country to the other. The record says, **“The boy grew and waxed strong in spirit”** (Luke 2:40).

When all preparations had been completed, the family of Jesus met with the other pilgrims at the village spring. Water skins were filled at the fountain and fastened to the backs of the donkeys and camels. The beasts drank their fill, and the signal was given for the procession to start. Friends who remained behind waved goodbye, and the smaller boys, too young to go,

39

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

stared wistfully as the caravan began to move. Dogs barked, and the babies taken along for their dedication at the temple cried.

The road from Nazareth led steadily downhill to the plain of Esdraelon. As the procession passed the bluffs, the pilgrims could see other caravans moving southward far down the valley.

By the time they were well into the plain, the noon hour had come, and the whole company paused for lunch. Then they moved on. As night neared, the caravan leader called a halt. By this time they were into the foothills of Samaria. The evening meal was eaten; prayers were said, and the people laid their mats on the ground and were soon asleep.

The Samaritan people were generally hostile and had no dealings with the Jews, but if a caravan were large, there was little danger that any of the Samaritan raiders would attempt to attack the party. As the first rays of dawn were seen in the east, the caravan was astir.

Late in the afternoon of the second day they came to the city of Sychar which stood between Mount Gerizim—the mount of blessing—and Mount Ebal—the mount of cursing. Nearby was Jacob's well where Jesus later was to meet and talk with the Samaritan woman.

As they continued on the third day to journey southward, they passed many historic spots. There was the Valley of Ajalon where Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stay their courses. Further south were the ruins of Bethel where Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven. Other places marked historic events in the lives of Saul and Samuel. These varied scenes must have attracted the interest of the boy Jesus. At last Jerusalem came into view. The weary but happy travelers ate their meal and then began preparations at once to rest. As many of the pilgrims as possible camped on the Mount of Olives where a magnificent view of the temple and its court could be

had.

The Passover must have been a time of intense interest to Jesus. There was the visit to the temple—that dazzling edifice built by Herod which stood almost as one of the wonders of the

40

The Visit to Jerusalem

world. Joseph and Jesus walked into the outer court and looked around, admiring the magnificent architecture. They continued until they came to the inner court. There was a sign carved in Greek letters, “Let no foreigners enter within the screen and enclosure around the holy place. Whosoever is taken in so doing will himself be the cause of the death that overtakes him.”

This meant of course that God was only for the Jews. Since He was only a young lad, Jesus could go no further than the Court of the Women. Joseph, however, was allowed to go into the inner court where the heads of families offered their lambs for sacrifice. He received the sacred parts of the Passover lamb and came out again through the Gate Beautiful. Then they went to a place where the family and others of the Nazareth company celebrated the Passover supper.

Only two days were required for the essential observances

of the Passover feast to be completed. Many might have wished to stay longer. Others were eager to get back home, since it was nearing the time of the wheat planting. Joseph's carpenter shop was without its master. At an agreed time, many of the Nazareth pilgrims started on their homeward journey, and Joseph and Mary joined the group. They took for granted that Jesus was with the other boys. Jesus as other lads naturally desired to be with those of his own age. All day long the company moved northward. As they neared a village (today called Ramaliah), the caravan prepared to halt for the night. It was then that Joseph and Mary discovered to their great alarm that Jesus was not with them. They ran quickly throughout the whole company inquiring anxiously of everyone as to His whereabouts. But not one had seen Him. What if something had happened to Him? The very thought almost drove them frantic. Would not the wrath of heaven be visited upon them if through their carelessness something had happened to Him?

But there was nothing to do but to wait for the morning to come. At the dawn they started to retrace their steps, reaching Jerusalem before the day was over. But neither that day nor the next could they find the lost boy. Their search was apparently

The Birth and Boyhood of Christ

without plan; they just went from one place to another walking and looking. An increasing dread came upon them. Finally on the third day they went to the temple, and there to their unbounded relief, they saw Him talking with the doctors and elders.

What had happened? The Passover supper had absorbed the whole soul and spirit of the boy Jesus. He felt that He had to contact the minds of the religious leaders as to what they believed was God's will and plan for the nation. It was His golden opportunity to ask them questions that were pounding in His soul. As He went into the temple, He found one of the groups of rabbis who were teaching. For a while He said nothing but listened quietly. Then the questions leaped from His lips. The rabbis were astounded by His insight and comprehension and in turn began asking Him questions. Though we do not know all the matters that were discussed, we do know that the burning question of the hour was when and how the Messiah would come and usher in the new age. Was He to be a warrior who would drive out the hated Romans? Or was He, as Isaiah

foretold in the 53rd chapter, to come to make an atonement for the sins of the nation? Most of the people, the rabbis included, held to the first view.

One day passed, then two. On the third day suddenly Jesus heard a familiar voice. It was His mother reproaching Him for not being in the company (Luke 2:48). The answer that the young lad gave marks the beginning of a new era in the life of Jesus. They are Jesus' only recorded words before He began public ministry. **“How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”** (Luke 2:49). Christ’s humanity clearly shows here. He had not meant to displease His mother. He had tried to make the most of His trip to Jerusalem, and when He finally left the doctors and lawyers in the temple and returned to the camp, He found that His family had already left. There was nothing for Him to do but to await their return. When Mary and Joseph found Him, He dutifully returned with them to Nazareth. But from that time on there was a change in His life. He began to think about His mission in the world.

42

The Visit to Jerusalem

The next eighteen years in Nazareth are called the silent

years, but they were by no means idle years. Jesus worked with His hands at the carpenter's trade and at the same time He was making preparation for His life's work. When that was completed He would go forth in His ministry which in three short years would profoundly change the destinies of the human race.

SPECIAL NOTE: A free gift subscription to CHRIST FOR THE NATIONS is available to

those who write to Christ For The Nations, P. O. Box 24910, Dallas, Texas 75224. This

magazine contains special feature stories of men of faith and includes prophetic articles

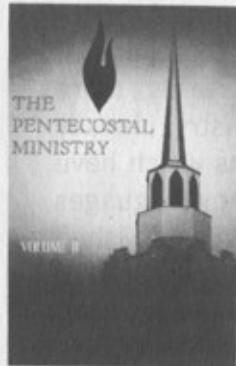
of the latest world developments. Why not include the names of your friends? (Due to

high mailing rates, this applies only to Canada and the U.S.)

Special Series For Ministers & Bible Students

Below is a special selection of books to aid ministers, Bible students,
and lay people in the ministry.

AMAZING DISCOVERIES



Amazing Discoveries in the Words of Jesus	2.50
Days of Christ and the Apostles	1.00
Difficult Questions About the Bible Answered.....	.95
Evolution—The Incredible Hoax.....	.95
Pentecostal Ministry (Vol. I)	1.00
Pentecostal Ministry (Vol. II).....	1.00
The Seventh Day	.95
The Bible is a Scientific Book.....	1.00
22 Questions Most Frequently Asked	
by the Unsaved	.95
Visitation: Key to Church Growth	.95
Who Do They Do It?	1.00
Apostles, Prophets & Governments.....	.95

Order books by title

Christ For The Nations — Box 24910 — Dallas, Texas 75224

THE GORDON LINDSAY STORY

The late Gordon Lindsay was founder of Christ For The Nations, Inc.—a missionary service organization sustained by Christians of all denominations. During more than 35 years of ministry, Lindsay wrote over 200 books which have been published in many languages all over the world. He established Christ For The Nations Institute, a discipleship training school with a two-year curriculum. This book, *The Gordon Lindsay Story*, tells the story of his remarkable ministry. It will inspire your faith!



\$2.00 (300 pgs.)



WRITE FOR YOUR FREE COPY OF THIS CATALOG LISTING ALL THE BOOKS AND TAPES AVAILABLE FROM CHRIST FOR THE NATIONS.

CHRIST FOR THE NATIONS • Box 24910 • Dallas, Texas 75224



Document Outline

- [The Birth and Boyhood of Christ](#)
 - [Contents](#)
 - [1 The World When Jesus Was Born](#)
 - [The State of the Nation Israel](#)
 - [2 Mary, the Mother of Jesus](#)
 - [3 The Birth of Jesus](#)
 - [Was Christ Born in the Winter?](#)
 - [The Visit of the Angels](#)
 - [The Poverty of Christ](#)
 - [The Visit of the Wise Men](#)
 - [Archelaus Reigns, and Joseph and Mary Return to Israel](#)
 - [4 The Boy Jesus](#)
 - [The Apocryphal Gospels](#)
 - [Childhood Experiences](#)
 - [The Home of Jesus](#)
 - [The Synagogue School](#)
 - [The Feasts of Israel](#)
 - [The Rebellion of Judas](#)
 - [5 The Visit to Jerusalem](#)