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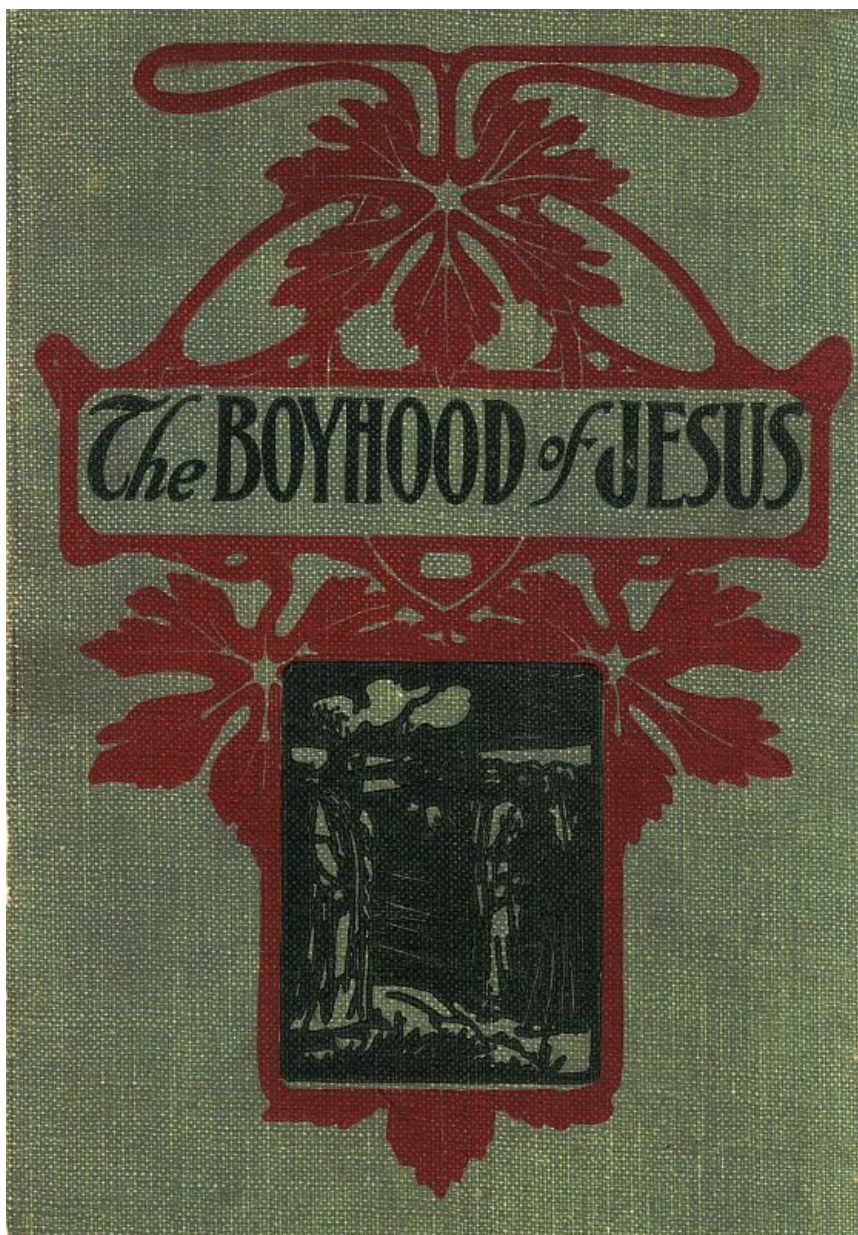
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS ***



THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS



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Try to be like Jesus.

The Bible tells of Jesus,
So gentle and so meek;
I'll try to be like Jesus
In ev'ry word I speak.

For Jesus, too, was loving,
His words were always kind;
I'll try to be like Jesus
In thought and word and mind.

I long to be like Jesus,
Who said "I am the Truth;"
Then I will give my heart to him,
Now, in my early youth.
—*Lillian Payson.*

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THE BABY JESUS.

The Little Lord Jesus.

Away in a manger,
No crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky
Looked down where he lay—
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay.
The cattle are lowing,
The poor baby wakes,
But little Lord Jesus
No crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus;
Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle
To watch Lullaby.
—*Luther's Cradle Hymn.*

The Child Promised.



THERE was once a time when there was no Christmas at all. There were no beautiful Christmas trees and happy songs and stockings filled with presents. No one shouted "Merry Christmas!" or "Christmas Gift!" No one told the sweet story of Jesus, because Jesus had not come into the world and so there was no Christmas. You see Christmas is Jesus' birthday, and before he came, of course people



could not keep his birthday. You have heard of how wicked and unhappy the people were long ago. Although God loved them and tried to make them do right, they forgot about him and did so many naughty, disobedient things that they were very miserable. Then God sent a wonderful message to them. He told them that some day he would send them his own Son, who should be their King and teach them how to do right. He said that his Son would come as a little child to grow up among them to love and help them. God even told them what they should call this baby who was to be their King. God said that Christ would be like a beautiful light showing them where to go. It would be as though some people stumbling sorrowfully along a dark street should suddenly see a bright light shining ahead of them, making everything cheerful and pleasant. They would be joyful like people who gather in the harvest. Jesus makes his children happy, and he wants them to shine out and make others happy. These people who were so unhappy before Jesus came, were very glad to know that some day he would come. They talked about him and waited a long, long time before he came and brought Christmas light into the world.



THE BABE IN BETHLEHEM.

The Coming of Jesus.

LONG ago there lived a good man named Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, who built houses and made many useful things for people. He also loved to read God's Gift Book, and tried to obey its rules. One day the king of the land where Joseph lived ordered everyone to write his name in a book, and pay a tax, in his own city. So Joseph and Mary his wife got ready to take a long journey to their old home, Bethlehem. There were no cars for them to ride in, so they must either walk or ride a donkey. As the fashion was there, Mary wore a long, white veil which covered her beautiful face.

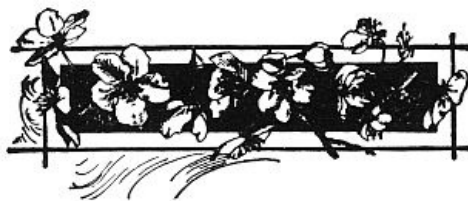
The streets were full of people, walking, or traveling on mules, donkeys, or camels—all going to be taxed. It was winter, but in a warm country, and they went through valleys of figs, olives, dates, oranges and other good things. [10]

They must have been very tired when they reached Bethlehem's gates, for they had come a long distance, and the dust of the road, the bustle of traveling, and the strangeness of it all, seemed to add to their trials. The people of Bethlehem had opened their homes and welcomed the strangers, until every house was full, and still the people kept coming. They could scarcely go up the steep hill, they were so weary, and Joseph tried to get a place to rest, but there was no kind invitation, no welcome in any house for them, and the inns were crowded. The inns were not like our hotels for travelers; they were flat-roofed stone buildings, without windows. There were no warm rooms with carpets, and soft beds for tired travelers to lie on. There were only bare floors, and everyone had to bring his own bed and food. The courtyard was full of animals—donkeys, mules, camels, sheep and cows.



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After Joseph had tried and failed to get a resting place, as there was no room anywhere, some kind friend told him of a cave on the hillside which was used as a stable, and to this they gladly went. Sweet-smelling hay was all around, and the floor was covered with straw; possibly mild-eyed cows and gentle sheep were sleeping in their stalls. Along the walls were mangers, or boxes to hold the grain and hay when the animals were fed. Here Mary and Joseph found a shelter and a sleeping place; indeed, they were thankful to be led there to rest upon the hay. In the night a wonderful thing took place: God sent the baby Gift Child into the world. This gift had been promised long before to Adam and Eve, and now it had come—the most beautiful and dearest Baby ever held in a mother's arms. The night grew dark, the house-lights went out one by one, and the people in Bethlehem slept. [12]



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THE ANGELS' SONG.

The Angels' Joy.

THE happiest song that was ever sung was sung on the first and best Christmas of all. There was a time when there was no Christmas. Can you think how glad you would be if you had no Christmas, and then one day all at once you had the first and best one of all?

This song was sung and the first Christmas came one night long years ago, far over the sea, near a little town called Bethlehem. It did not come first to kings and great people, but to some shepherds who were sitting up all night watching their sheep.

Outside of the city were beautiful sloping green fields where the shepherds let their sheep run about and eat the grass. The weather there is very pleasant at Christmas time; not at all like our weather. The shepherds can sit out on the grass all night, watching their sheep. [16]



Did you ever see a sheep or a lamb? Do you know that your mittens and jackets and nice warm dresses are made of the wool which the sheep have to spare for us? The shepherds have to stay out with the sheep all night because they are very gentle and timid animals. They cannot fight for themselves, and if they were left alone the wolves would catch them.

One night about 1900 years ago some shepherds were watching their sheep in those fields. Very likely the shepherds were some of the people who were hoping that Jesus would soon come; perhaps they were talking about him, and wondering how they would know if he did come. [17]

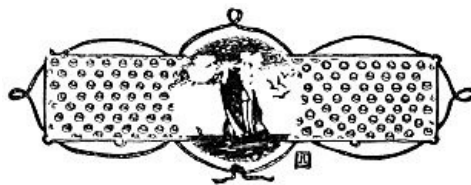
All at once a bright light shone about them, and they saw an angel and heard him speak to them. Very kind and beautiful the angel looked, but the shepherds were frightened.

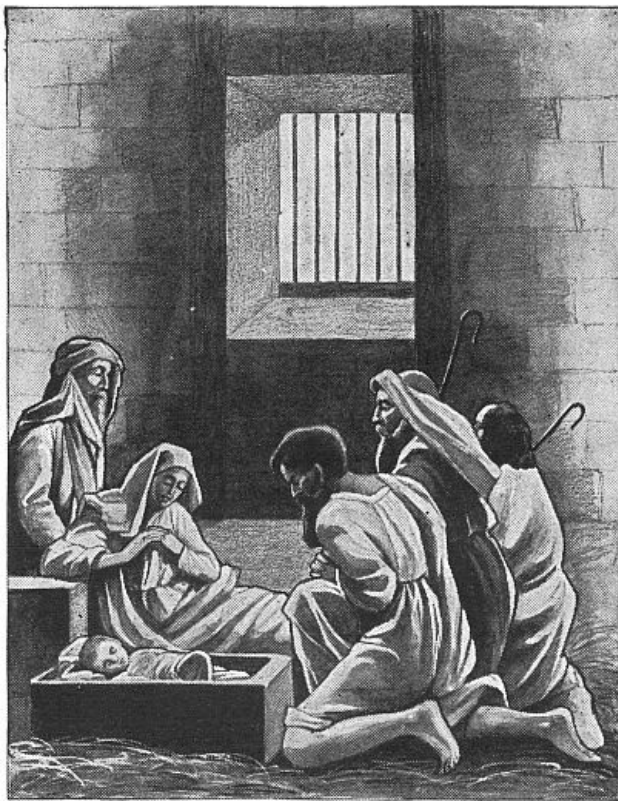
The angel said to them, "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."



As the angel was speaking, the shepherds saw with him a great number of beautiful, shining angels. Then was sung for the first time this grand song, for Christmas had come. I do not know the tune, but the very words are in the Bible: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Glory to God, for the greatest gift that ever came; peace on earth, for all who love this Savior. [18]

As soon as the angels finished the song they went back to heaven, and left the shepherds alone.





THE SHEPHERDS VISIT JESUS.

The Shepherds Visit Jesus.

WHAT would you do if you had been one of those shepherds to whom the angels brought the good news of Jesus' birth? I will tell you what they did. They left their sheep to take care of themselves, and hurried off to Bethlehem, for that was the city the angels meant.

They went in the gate and at last found the right place. It was called a stable.

They soon found the dear little baby Jesus, just as the angels had said, lying in a manger, and Mary his mother and Joseph taking care of him.

The little manger was in the stable, and there the shepherds stood beside it and looked into the face of the babe.

Do you think the dear little baby had a nice bed to lie in? It looked like a block hollowed out. It was the box out of which the cows ate.

It was warm and soft, because his mother had put nice soft hay in it, and wrapped him all up with a long strip of cloth. They were in a stable because so many people were in the city that there was not a bit of room left. I think it must have been a clean place, with lots of nice, sweet new hay.

When the shepherds saw the baby they knew that he was really Jesus their Savior. They knelt at his feet and worshiped him. They were so happy that they could hardly say what they felt. They soon went away and told the good news to every one they met. They were very glad because Jesus had come. He came as a little baby so he would know how to love and help all other babies and little children, and be an example for them to follow as they grew older.

We are glad Jesus came, and we love to keep his birthday, because he gives us joy and peace, fills our hearts with love, and helps us to be good and happy here and to get ready to be happy in heaven.

God, our Father in heaven, sent to us this wonderful Christmas Gift. Think of the great love he must have for us, to give us his Son. Think of the great love Jesus had for us, that he could leave his beautiful home in heaven to come and help us and show us how to live. Let us thank him every day for his great love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" to be our Savior.



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THE BABY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

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The Child in the Temple.

JOSEPH, and Mary the mother of Jesus, stayed in Bethlehem for a while. When Jesus was only eight days old he received his name; he was called "Jesus," as the angel had told Mary. It was the custom of the Jews to take their first son to the temple and present him to God, so Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to present Jesus to God in the temple.



At the time when Jesus was born, there was an old man, named Simeon, living in Jerusalem. He was a good man and was looking and wishing for Jesus, the promised Messiah, to come. God's Holy Spirit had told him that he should not die until he had seen Jesus. Simeon went up to the temple to worship God every day. One day while he was in the temple Mary and Joseph brought the child to present him to God. When Simeon saw them he knew that the infant in Mary's arms was his Savior. He at once took Jesus in his arms, and with a heart full of joy he blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." He had seen the Savior for whom he looked, and had nothing more to wish; he was perfectly satisfied to die, now that he had seen Jesus, the Savior of the world. When Jesus comes into our hearts we are satisfied, and not only ready to

die, but we are ready to live and do with glad hearts all that God wishes us to do. The best way to praise God for his wonderful gift is to *live for him* and lead others to praise him.

God's Spirit was upon Simeon, and he rejoiced to see Jesus his Savior, whom God had sent to his people. Do you wonder that Simeon's heart was full of joy at seeing God's greatest gift to man? Should not we praise him for it?

At the time of Jesus' birth, the world was very dark and sinful. People did not know much about God or what he wanted them to do. In Jesus, Simeon saw a great Light which would lighten the world.

Did you ever try to walk in a dark night where there were no lights to shine on the pathway? If so, you were sure to go the wrong road, or to stumble and fall. While you were walking in the darkness, did a great electric light suddenly shine out, making all light about you? So into the dark lives of the people Jesus came to be a Light. We are sure that Jesus is a Light to us and to all the world. He lived a holy life, so he made a right path for us to follow. He showed us how to live and how to die, so that we may live forever in heaven. If we take his love into our hearts and do as he tells us, we shall walk in the light. Just as a railway locomotive runs in the great light from the lamp that sends its bright rays along the track, so Jesus dwelling in our hearts shines his light just where we are to travel—that is, he tells us by his Spirit and by his Word how we are to act and what we are to do.



While Mary and Joseph and Jesus were yet in the temple, Anna, a prophetess, came in and saw Jesus. Then she, too, praised the Lord because Jesus had come to be a Light to the world. She told the people that Jesus was the Son of God who had come into this world to live in our hearts and be our Light. Jesus in our hearts is like a torchlight which we carry with us always, and which never goes out, but gives us light wherever we go. We follow this light when we do the things that Jesus taught us to do, and when we follow the example that he left us.



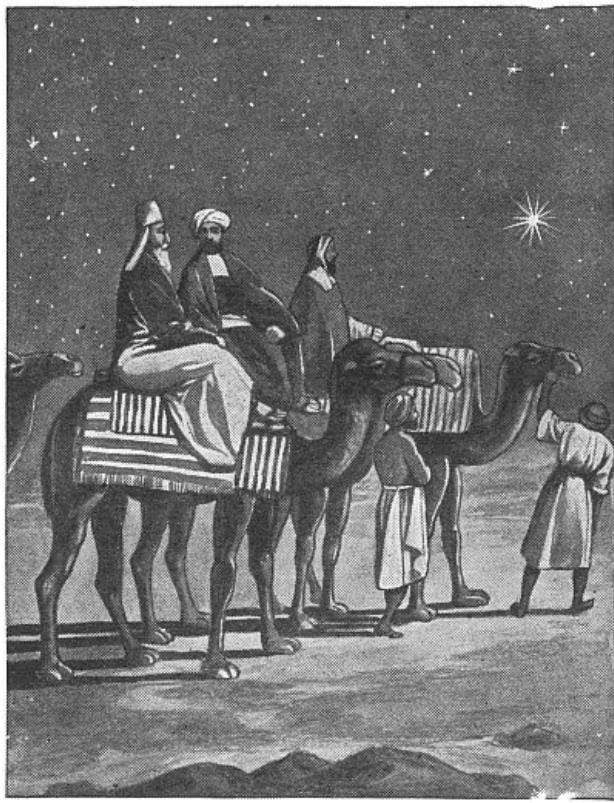
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THE WISE MEN VISIT JESUS.

The Journey of the Wise Men.

THERE were some very rich, wise men living away off in another country. God wanted them to know about his Son. He did not send angels to tell them; he took another way. He put a strange new star in the sky. These wise men spent a great deal of time studying about stars, so when they saw this they were very much interested in it. When they saw strange stars they thought strange things would happen. They had heard that the Jews were looking for Jesus to come and be their king, so they thought this star must mean that he had come. They thought very likely that he had come to Jerusalem, for that was the great city of the Jews. So they started on their long journey. [32]

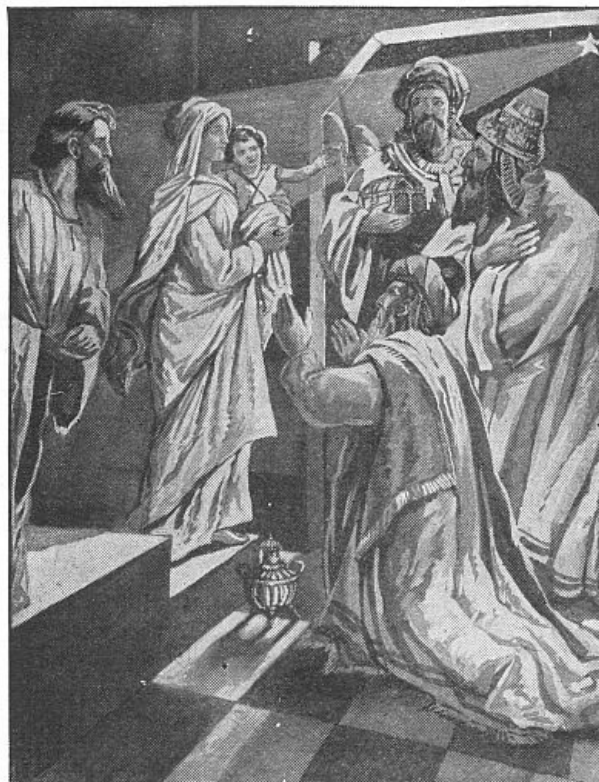


They traveled on until they reached Jerusalem. Then they went at once to Herod the king and asked him where Jesus was who was born King of the Jews. Herod had not heard that Jesus was born, and when he heard this question he was troubled, for he was not born king—he had been made king. So he was very much afraid that Jesus, who was born King, would take his place.

He called in the Jews, who he thought ought to know, and asked them to find out where Jesus was to be born. They looked in the Bible and found that he was to be born in Bethlehem.

When Herod heard this he told the wise men to go to Bethlehem and look for Jesus, and when they found him to bring him word so that he might go and worship him. He wanted to kill Jesus, but he did not tell the wise men so. They again started out, and they were very much pleased to see the same star still shining in the sky.

This star went before them to guide them to Bethlehem. They believed the star would guide them right, so they followed it until it stood over a house in the city.



THE WISE MEN'S GIFTS.

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The Wise Men's Gifts to Jesus.

WHEN the wise men went into the house they found Jesus there with Mary, his mother, and Joseph, her husband.



As soon as they saw him they knew it was Jesus, whom they had come so far to see. They fell down before him and worshiped him. They brought him rich gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh were costly and useful; they must have been of great help to Mary and Joseph, who were very poor. These gifts from the wise men to Jesus showed their love for him. Those who truly love Jesus now will be glad to give of their money to help the poor and needy, and to teach those who do not know about him; and what we do for his sake he counts as done for him. But the greatest gift that we can give Jesus is the gift of our hearts.

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While they were there worshiping Jesus, God was looking into the heart of Herod, reading his wicked thoughts. He knew that if the wise men went back and told Herod where Jesus was, he would come and kill him. So when the wise men were ready to go away, God warned them in a dream to go back another way and not to go near Jerusalem, where they would meet Herod. They believed God in this too, and did as he told them to.



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ON THE WAY TO EGYPT.

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The Flight into Egypt.

WHEN the wise men were gone, God sent an angel to warn Joseph to take Jesus and Mary, his mother, and leave Bethlehem. He told him to take them to Egypt and stay there until he told them they might return. Why do you suppose God told Joseph to leave their home? He knew that Herod wanted to kill Jesus, and that it would be dangerous to stay there. If they went to Egypt they would be safe, for Herod had no power over Egypt. They would find friends there too, for a great many Jews were living in Egypt then.



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Joseph loved God and believed him, so he proved that he loved and believed him by obeying at once. He did not wait until morning, but at once arose, got ready, and took Mary and Jesus and they started in the night for Egypt. They did not go to some other place instead. They went just when God told them to go, and went just where he told them to; and they were safe while they followed God's directions.

Jesus was soon safe in Egypt. Herod did not know this, and was still making his plans to kill him. He was a very wicked, cruel man. He was wicked enough to kill two of his own sons, so you see he did not care much about killing a baby.

He did not know just how old Jesus was, but thought he could not be over two years old. He did not know where he lived, for the wise men did not go back to tell him. But he was bound to kill Jesus, so he told his cruel soldiers to go into every house in Bethlehem, even into the houses near Bethlehem, and kill every boy baby they could find two years old or less.

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So they went around killing all the baby boys. They would go into a house, snatch the baby out of its crib, or out of its mother's arms, and kill it right before her eyes. That was a sad time in Bethlehem; for many poor mothers were weeping for their children. It was very sad for the mothers, but the little boys were safe in heaven with God.

God was still watching over and taking care of his Son; so when at last Herod was dead, God again sent an angel to Joseph, telling him to take Jesus and Mary and go back to the land of Israel, or the land of the Jews. So Joseph again set out on a journey. But he heard that Herod's son was king, and he was afraid to go back to Bethlehem, so he went to Nazareth.

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THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

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Jesus in the Temple.

WHEN Jesus was a very little baby, his mother took him to the temple, their church, and gave him to the Lord. I suppose they wrote down his name, as we do our Cradle Roll babies. If they did, I think we may call Jesus a Cradle Roll baby. I am sure that Mary and Joseph did all they could to help the baby to grow up a good, wise, loving boy. The dear little babies do not stay babies long; then their toys go and they want books, for they must learn a great deal before they are grown-up men and women. So Jesus' toys were soon put away, and he began to study just as you do. He grew bigger and stronger every day. At last he was as big as you; then bigger, until he was as big as your brother or sister. [46]



Do you know someone who is twelve years old? At last Jesus got to be so old. At that age a boy was no longer a Cradle Roll baby, nor even a child. Jesus' mother said that now he could go with her and Joseph and their friends when they went up to Jerusalem to church. Did you ever go on a journey? How did you go? On the cars. Were you glad to go? You got tired, I know. A picture of Joseph and Mary and Jesus on their way to Jerusalem would show you that they all walked. It was a long, hard journey, for they not only had to walk all the way, but they had to carry all their bundles. They went in a company, so they had a nice time talking with their friends as they walked. Then when tired or hungry, they would stop by the way in the shade of some [47]

great rocks—for in that land rocks are found oftener than shade trees.

You can make a picture of this journey in your mind. Think of the wall of the city of Jerusalem and the open gate; inside the wall is the church, or temple; there is a road of sand, and on both sides of the road are a few trees and a good many rocks.

At last they all reached the city, and slept and rested and ate their food, then bathed and dressed in their best clothes, and went to the temple to worship God and hear about his law out of the Bible.

All this was very wonderful and beautiful to Jesus. He began to understand that God was his Father, and that he had some very great work to do in the world. He was so interested that when it was time to start for home he stayed after all the rest left, and went back to the temple. Perhaps he had been allowed to go by himself and did not know they had started home. [48]

Mary did not miss Jesus for some time. She thought he was with his young friends having a good time. At last she became frightened, for she found that he was not with any of these friends. Oh, how frightened she was! Her beautiful boy that she loved more than her own life, was lost! I once knew of a very lovely boy who was lost all night. How his mother cried, and how we looked for him all night! In the morning his mother was the one to find him, then her sorrow was changed to joy.



Mary and Joseph left their friends and went back to the city. In her heart Jesus' mother knew where to look for him. Can you think where he was? They found him in the temple talking with the teachers. They were talking about God's law. They had their books, reading and studying together. These books were made of strips of parchment or paper fastened at both ends to round sticks and rolled up. [49]

When Jesus saw his mother and knew how she had grieved about him, he left the teachers at once and went back home with her and Joseph. He told them that he knew God was his Father, and that he must be about his work. But quickly and lovingly he obeyed his mother and went with her, even though he longed to stay.



Do you think Jesus was about his heavenly Father's business when he obeyed Mary and Joseph and went home so lovingly with them? He surely was, for some of his work that he came to earth to do was to show children how to treat their parents. One of the great laws of God is, "Children, obey your parents." [50]

Jesus loved to be in the temple, but he quickly and cheerfully went home with his mother and Joseph. I think that as he and his parents were with many of their dear friends, he was allowed to go around among them and with them when they went to the temple, so when his parents left he perhaps did not really know when his mother started. Do you think she was careless to go off and leave him? No, I am sure she was not; she no doubt thought he was coming along with his aunts or cousins or his little friends in the company.



THE BOY JESUS IN HIS HOME.

Jesus in His Home.

Do you like cold, dark, stormy days? How do you feel when you get up and find the sun shining in your window? You cannot help feeling good—some of it gets into your heart and makes you feel happy. You make us think of sunny days. Sometimes children are cross, and they make us think of stormy days. The gloomy, naughty, selfish child makes everything in the house seem sad. But how about the bright, happy, laughing, helpful child? When he comes into the room, it seems as if he brought some sunshine in. He is a sunshiny boy.



Do you know I am thinking of a boy who I believe was the sunshiniest one among all the sunshiny children in the world. Who was he? He was Jesus, the dear boy who was so ready to obey his parents. He started home with Mary and Joseph, perhaps telling Joseph all about how it happened that he was left behind them. [54]

After their long, hard journey, how glad they were to get home! I am sure Jesus did all he could to get everything ready. First he helped Joseph bring in all the things they had with them, and Mary stood at the door of the little house, looking at the boy she loved so much, and feeling so glad and thankful that he had not really been lost.

Then when they were all settled and rested and Joseph had to go to his carpenter work, Jesus would do such little things as he could to help him, while Mary was doing her work. Joseph was a carpenter. What do you think he made? What tools did he use? Then I think Jesus must have learned to use them, too. Perhaps sometimes Mary was sick, and then I am sure he did all he could to help and comfort her and make her forget her pain. He would bring the jar of fresh water, bathe her head and give her a cool drink. If your mamma was sick, what could you do to be a blessing to her? I knew a little boy who was a real sunshine boy. When mamma was sick he would set the table for papa, and hand mamma a cup of tea, and give her a smile and a loving kiss. We can all do so much, and many other things. Think of some of them. You can pick up your toys and books and keep them tidy, without waiting for mamma to talk about it; you can always run to her with a loving kiss when you wake up and when you go to bed; you can be very gentle and kind to your little brothers and sisters; you can try every day in every way to make sunshine in your home—to make your home the most beautiful place in the world. Boys and girls who do that can make their homes next to heaven. [55]



Jesus did that even when he was very small. As he grew older he grew wiser and better. He helped Joseph more and more in his shop, and what he did not know, Joseph taught him. [56]



He did not spend all his time in the shop. He perhaps went to school, for he loved to study. I think Mary loved to teach a boy who was so ready to learn. He would stand beside her while she read to him. [57]

He liked to play like other boys, but he always did the things that other children should do, so they would know just what was right. That is why I tell you so much about him. Perhaps children would not know just the right way, if Jesus had not been a boy and lived with his mother and loved and obeyed and helped her.



Around the Throne.

Around the throne of God in heaven,
Thousands of children stand,
Children whose sins are all forgiven,
A holy, happy band.

What brought them to that world above,
That heaven so bright and fair,
Where all is peace and joy and love?
How came those children there?

On earth they sought the Savior's grace,
On earth they loved his name;
So now they see his blessed face,
And stand before the Lamb.

—*Annie H. Shepherd.*

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Page 27, repeated word "him" removed from text. Original read (we praise him him for)

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS ***

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