

## **The Holy Family at Nazareth. Jesus at the Age of Twelve in The Temple of Jerusalem**

There were three separate rooms in the house at Nazareth, that of the Mother of God being the largest and most pleasant; in it Jesus, Mary, and Joseph met to pray. I very seldom saw them together at other times.

They stood at prayer, their hands crossed upon their breast, and they appeared to speak aloud. I often saw them praying by a light. They stood under a lamp that had several wicks,

or near a kind of branched candlestick fastened to the wall, and upon which the flame burned. They

were most of the time alone in their respective rooms, Joseph working in his.

I saw him cutting sticks and laths, planing wood, and carrying up a beam, Jesus helping him. Mary was generally engaged sewing or knitting with little needles, at which she sat on the ground, her feet crossed under her, and a little basket at her side. They slept alone, each in a separate room. The bed consisted of a cover which in the morning was rolled up.

I saw Jesus assisting His parents in every possible way, and also on the street and wherever opportunity offered, cheerfully, eagerly, and obligingly helping everyone. He assisted His foster-father in his trade, or devoted Himself to prayer and contemplation. He was a model for all the children of Nazareth; they loved Him and feared to displease Him. When they were naughty and committed faults, their parents used to say to them: "What will Joseph's Son say when I tell Him this? How sorry He will be!" Sometimes they gently complained to Him before the little ones, saying; "Tell them not to do such or such a thing anymore." And Jesus took it playfully and like a little child. He would beg the children affectionately to do so and so, would pray with them to His Heavenly Father for strength to become better, and would persuade them to acknowledge their faults and ask pardon on the spot.

About an hour's journey from Nazareth toward Sephoris, is a little place called Ophna. There, during the boyhood of Jesus, dwelt the parents of James the Greater and of John. In those early years, they associated with Jesus, until their parents removed to Bethsaida and they themselves went to the fishery.



There lived in Nazareth an Essenian family related to Joachim. They had four sons, a few years older or younger than Jesus, named respectively, Cleophas, James, Judas, and Japhet. They, too, were playmates of Jesus, and with their parents were in the habit of making the journey to the Temple along with the Holy Family. These four brothers became, at the time of Jesus' baptism, disciples of John, and after his murder, disciples of Jesus. When Andrew and Saturnin crossed the Jordan to Jesus, they followed them and spent the whole day with Him. They were among those disciples of John whom Jesus took with Him to the marriage feast at Cana. Cleophas is the same to whom, in company with Luke, Jesus appeared at Emmaus. He was married and dwelt at Emmaus. His wife afterward joined the women of the Community. Jesus was tall and slender with a delicate face and a beaming countenance and though pale, He was healthy-looking. His perfectly straight, golden hair was parted over His high, open forehead and fell upon His shoulders. He wore a long, light-brownish gray tunic, which reached to His feet, the sleeves rather wide around the hand.

At the age of eight years, Jesus went for the first time with His parents to Jerusalem for the Pasch, and every succeeding year He did the same. In those first visits, Jesus had already excited attention in Jerusalem among the friends with whom He and His parents stayed, also among the priests and doctors. They spoke of the pious, intelligent Child, of Joseph's extraordinary Son, just as amongst us one might, at the annual pilgrimages, notice in particular this or that modest, holy-looking person, this or that clever peasant child, and recognize him again the next year. So Jesus had already some acquaintances in the city when, in His twelfth year, with their friends and their sons, He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem. His parents were accustomed to walk with the people from their own part of the country, and they knew that Jesus, who now made the journey for the fifth time, always went with the other youths from Nazareth.

But this time Jesus had, on the return journey not far from the Mount of Olives, separated from His companions, who all thought that He had joined His parents who were following. Jesus had, however, gone to that side of Jerusalem nearest to Bethlehem, to the inn at which the Holy Family before Mary's Purification had put up. Mary and Joseph thought Him on ahead with the other Nazarenes, while these latter thought that He was following with His parents. When at last they all met at Gophna, the anxiety of Mary and Joseph at His absence was very great. They returned at once to Jerusalem, making inquiries after Him on the way and everywhere in the city itself. But they could not find Him, since He had not been where they usually stayed. Jesus had slept at the inn before the Bethlehem gate, where the people knew

### **Him and His parents.**

**There He had joined several youths and gone with them to two schools of the city, the first day to one, the second to another. On the morning of the third day, He had gone to a third school at the Temple, and in the afternoon into the Temple itself where His parents found Him. These schools were all different, and not all exactly schools of the Law. Other branches were taught in them. The last mentioned was in the neighborhood of the Temple and from it the Levites and priests were chosen.**

**Jesus by His questions and answers so astonished and embarrassed the doctors and rabbis of all these schools that they resolved, on the afternoon of the third day, in the public lecture hall of the Temple and in presence of the rabbis most deeply versed in the various sciences "to humble the Boy Jesus." The scribes and doctors had concerted the plan together; for, although pleased at first, they had in the end become vexed at Him. They met in the public lecture hall in the middle of the Temple porch in front of the Sanctuary, in the round place where later Jesus also taught. There I saw Jesus sitting in a large chair which He did not, by a great deal, fill. Around Him was a crowd of aged Jews in priestly robes. They were listening attentively, and appeared to be perfectly furious. I feared they would lay hands upon Him. On the top of the chair in which Jesus was sitting, were brown heads like those of dogs. They were greenish brown, the upper parts glistening and sparkling with a yellow light. There were similar heads and figures upon several long tables, or benches, that stood in the Temple sideways from this place, covered with offerings. The place was very large and so crowded that one could scarcely imagine himself in a church.**

**As Jesus had in the schools illustrated His answers and explanations by all kinds of examples from nature, art, and science, the scribes and doctors had diligently gathered together masters in all these branches. They now began, one by one, to dispute with Him. He remarked that although, properly speaking, such subjects did not appear appropriate to the Temple, yet He would discuss them since such was His Father's will. But they understood not that He referred to His Heavenly Father; they imagined that Joseph had commanded Him to show off His learning.**

**Jesus now answered and taught upon medicine. He described the whole human body in a way far beyond the reach of even the most learned. He discoursed with the same facility upon astronomy, architecture, agriculture, geometry, arithmetic, jurisprudence and, in fine, upon every subject proposed to Him. He applied all so skillfully to the Law and the Promise, to the Prophecies, to the Temple, to the mysteries of worship and sacrifice that His hearers, surprised and confounded, passed successively from**

astonishment and admiration to fury and shame. They were enraged at hearing some things that they never before knew, and at hearing others that they had never before understood.

Jesus had been teaching two hours, when Joseph and Mary entered the Temple. They inquired after their Child of the Levites whom they knew, and received for answer that He was with the doctors in the lecture hall. But as they were not at liberty to enter that hall, they sent one of the Levites in to call Jesus. Jesus sent them word that He must first finish what He was then about. Mary was very much troubled at His not obeying at once, for this was the first time He had given His parents to understand that He had other commands than theirs to fulfill. He continued to teach for another hour, and then He left the hall and joined His parents in the porch of Israel, the women's porch, leaving His hearers confounded, confused, and enraged. Joseph was quite awed and astonished, but he kept a humble silence. Mary, however, drawing near to Jesus, said, "Child, why hast Thou done this to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!" But Jesus answered gravely, "Why have you sought Me? Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand. They at once began with Him their journey home. The bystanders gazed at them in astonishment, and I was in dread lest they should lay hands upon the Boy, for I saw that some of them were full of rage. I wondered at their allowing the Holy Family to depart so peaceably. Although the crowd was dense, yet a wide path was made to permit the Holy Family to pass. I saw all the details and heard almost the whole of Jesus' teaching, but I cannot remember all. It made a great impression upon the scribes. Some recorded the affair as a notable event, while here and there it was whispered around, giving rise to all kinds of remarks and false reports. But the true statement, the scribes kept to themselves. They spoke of Jesus as of a very forward boy, possessed indeed of fine talents, but said those talents required to be cultivated. I saw the Holy Family again leaving the city, outside of which they joined a party of about three men, two women, and some children. I did not know them, but they appeared to be from Nazareth. They went together to different places around Jerusalem, also to Mount Olivet. They wandered around the beautiful pleasure grounds there found, occasionally standing to pray, their hands crossed on their breast. I saw them also going over a bridge that spanned a brook. This walking around and praying of the little party reminded me forcibly of a pilgrimage.

When Jesus had returned to Nazareth, I saw a feast in Anne's house, at which were gathered all the youths and maidens among their friends and relatives. I know not whether it was a feast of rejoicing at Jesus' having been found, a

feast solemnized upon the return from the Paschal journey, or a feast customary upon the completion of a son's twelfth year. Whatever it may have been, Jesus appeared to be the object of it.

Beautiful bowers were erected over the table, from which hung garlands of vine leaves and ears of corn. The children were served with grapes and little rolls. There were present at this feast thirty-three boys, all future disciples of Jesus, and I received an instruction upon the years of Jesus' life. During the whole feast, Jesus instructed the other boys, and explained to them a very wonderful parable which, however, was only imperfectly understood. It was of a marriage feast at which water could be turned into wine and the lukewarm guests into zealous friends; and again, of a marriage feast where the wine could be changed into Blood and the bread into Flesh, which Blood and Flesh would abide with the guests until the end of the world as strength and consolation, as a living bond of union. He said also to one of the youths, a relative of His own named Nathanael: "I shall be present at thy marriage."

From His twelfth year, Jesus was always like a teacher among His companions. He often sat among them instructing them or walked about the country with them.