



THE CHILD LIFE OF JESUS

Ellen G. White

Child Life of Jesus --No. 1.

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Before he came to this earth, Jesus was a great king in heaven. He was as great as God, and yet he loved the poor people of this earth so much that he was willing to lay aside his kingly crown, his beautiful robe, and come to this earth as one of the human family. We cannot understand how Christ became a little, helpless babe. He could have come to earth in such beauty that he would have been unlike the sons of men. His face could have been bright with light, and his form could have been tall and beautiful. He could have come in such a way as to charm those who looked upon him; but this was not the way that God planned he should come among the sons of men. He was to be like those who belonged to the human family and to the Jewish race. His features were to be like those of other human beings, and he was not to have such beauty of person as to make people point him out as different from others. He was to come as one of the human family, and to stand as a man before heaven and earth. He had come to take man's place, to pledge himself in man's behalf, to pay the debt that sinners owed. He was to live a pure life on the earth, and show that Satan had told a falsehood when he claimed that the human family belonged to him forever, and that God could not take men out of his hands.

The Child Life of Jesus

Men first beheld Christ as a babe, as a child. His parents were very poor, and he had nothing in this earth save that which the poor have. He passed through all the trials that the poor and lowly pass through from babyhood to childhood, from youth to manhood. Nearly two thousand years ago a voice was heard in heaven from the throne of God saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said, I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger is still the divine Son of God? Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that he who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, he became one with us. In him God and man became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father.

From his earliest year, Christ lived a life of toil. In his youth he worked with his father at the carpenter's trade, and thus showed that there is nothing of which to be ashamed in work. Though he was the King of heaven, he yet worked at a humble trade, and thus rebuked all idleness in human beings. All work done as Christ did his work is noble and honorable. Those who are idle do not follow the example that Christ has given; for from his childhood he was a pattern of obedience and industry. He was as a pleasant sunbeam in the home circle. Faithfully and cheerfully he acted his part, doing the humble duties that he was called to do in his lowly life. Christ became one with us in order that he might do us good. He lived such a life of poverty and labor as would help the poor to understand that he could sympathize with the poor. He himself had shared the burdens of the lowly. The world's Redeemer did not live a life of selfish ease and pleasure. He did not choose to be the son of a rich man, or to be in a position where men would praise and flatter him. He passed through the hardships of those who toil for a living, and he could comfort all those who have to work at some humble trade. The story of his life of toil is written so that we may receive comfort out of it. Those who know the kind of life Christ lived, can never feel that the poor are to be despised, and that those who are rich are better than the humble.

Mrs. E. G. White.

Child Life of Jesus.--No. 2.

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The Child Life of Jesus

It is written of Jesus in his childhood, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." Every year his parents went to the city of Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover, and in his twelfth year Jesus went with them to the city. When the feast was over, the parents, forgetting all about Jesus, started on their road home with some of their relations, and did not know that Jesus was not with them. They supposed that he was in the company, and went a whole day's journey before they found out that he was not there.

Frightened as to what had become of him, they turned back to the city, and for three days they sought him with great anxiety. "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions." The doctors were very learned men, and yet they were astonished as they heard Jesus asking wonderful questions, and saw that he had a good understanding of the Scriptures.

His parents also listened in amazement, as they heard his searching questions. Jesus knew that God had given him this opportunity to give light to those who were in darkness, and he sought to do all in his power to open the truth to the rabbis and teachers. He led these men to speak about different verses in the Bible telling about the Messiah whom they expected to come. They thought that Christ was to come to the world in great glory at this time, and make the Jewish nation the greatest nation on the earth. But Jesus asked them what the Scriptures meant when they spoke of the humble life, the suffering and sorrow, the rejection and death, of the Son of God. Though Christ seemed like a child that was seeking help from those who knew a great deal more than he did, he was bringing light to their minds in every word he spoke. He repeated the scripture in such a way as gave them clear light in regard to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He made the truth shine out like a light in a darkened place.

While Christ was teaching others, he himself was receiving light and knowledge about his own work and mission in the world; for it is plainly stated that Christ "grew in knowledge." What a lesson there is in this for all the youth of our day! They may be like Christ, and by studying the word of God, by receiving the light that the Holy Spirit can give them, they will be able to give light to others. As they teach others of the grace of God, God will give them new grace from heaven. The more they try to teach others about the riches of Christ, the better understanding will they have of the plan of salvation, and the more richly will the grace of God abide in their own hearts. If the youth will remain as humble as did the child Jesus, they will become light-bearers to the world.

The wise men were surprised at the questions that the child Jesus asked. They wanted to encourage him in studying the Bible, and they wanted to see how much he knew about the prophecies. This is why they asked him so many questions. Joseph and Mary were as much surprised at the wise answers of their son as were the wise men

The Child Life of Jesus

themselves. When there was a pause, Mary, the mother of Jesus, came up to her son, and asked, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Then a divine light shone from Jesus' face, as he lifted his hand and said, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them." They did not know what he really meant by these words, but they knew he was a true son, who would be submissive to their commands. Though he was the Son of God, he went down to Nazareth and was subject to his parents. Though his mother did not understand the meaning of his words, she did not forget them, but "kept all these sayings in her heart."

At the age of twelve, the people saw that the Holy Spirit was resting upon Jesus. He felt something of the burden of the mission for which he had come to our world. His soul was stirred into action. As one who would learn, he asked such questions as would flash light into the minds of those with whom he was talking. He helped them to understand the true meaning of the prophets, and showed them what the mission and work of the Messiah would be. The Jewish people had wrong ideas about the Messiah and his work. They thought that when Christ came in their day, he would do grand and wonderful things, that he would set them above all other people. They were looking for the glory that will be seen when Christ comes the second time, and did not study the Bible so that they could know that he was to come the first time in a very lowly way. But Jesus asked questions about the scriptures that pointed to his first appearing, that flashed light into the minds of those who were willing to receive the truth. Before he had come to the earth, he had given these prophecies to his servants who had written them down, and now as he studied the Bible, the Holy Spirit brought these things to his mind, and showed him the great work that he was to do in the earth. As he grew in knowledge, he imparted knowledge to others. But though he was wiser than the learned men, he did not become proud, or feel that he was above doing the most humble toil. He took his share of the burden, with his father, mother, and brethren, and toiled to help support the family. Though the doctors had been amazed at his wisdom, he obeyed his parents, and worked with his own hands as any toiler would work. It is stated of Jesus that as he grew older he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

The understanding that he obtained from day to day, that showed him how wonderful should be his mission in the world, did not lead him to neglect the humblest duties. He cheerfully took up the work that children and youth who dwell in humble households are called upon to do; for he knew what it was to be pressed by poverty. He understands the temptations of children, for he bore their sorrows and trials. Firm and steadfast was his purpose to do the right; though others tried to lead him to do evil, he yet never did wrong, and would not turn away in the least from the path of truth and right. He always obeyed his parents, and did every duty that lay in his path. But his childhood and youth were anything but smooth and joyous. His spotless life aroused the envy and jealousy of his brethren; for they did not believe on him. They were annoyed

The Child Life of Jesus

because he did not act in all things as they did, and would not become one with them in doing evil. In his home-life he was cheerful but never boisterous. He ever seemed like one who was seeking to learn. He took great delight in nature, and God was his teacher.

Mrs. E. G. White.

Child Life of Jesus.--No. 3.

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Even in his childhood Jesus saw that the people did not live in the way that the Bible pointed out as the way for them to live. He studied the Bible, and followed the simple habits and ways that the word of God directs; and when people found fault with him because he was so lowly and simple, he pointed them to the word of God. His brothers told him that he thought himself much better than they were, and reproved him for setting himself up above the priests and rulers of the people. Jesus knew that if he obeyed the word of God, he would not find rest and peace in the home circle.

As he grew in knowledge, he knew that great errors were increasing among men, and that because the people followed the commands of men instead of obeying the commands of God, simplicity and truth and true piety were becoming lost in the earth. He saw the people going through forms and ceremonies in their worship of God, and passing by the sacred truths that made their service of value. He knew that their faithless services could not do them any good, and would not bring them peace or rest. They could not know what it was to have freedom of spirit when they did not serve God in truth.

Jesus did not always silently look upon these worthless services, but sometimes told the people where they were going wrong. Because he was so quick to see what was false and what was true, his brethren were greatly annoyed at him; for they said that whatever the priest taught ought to be considered as sacred as a command of God. But Jesus taught both by his words and by his example that men ought to worship God just as he has directed them to worship him, and not follow the ceremonies that men have said ought to be followed. His brethren were greatly put out because Jesus would not do as the priests directed, but followed the word of God rather than the traditions of men.

The priests and the Pharisees also were annoyed because this child would not accept their human inventions, maxims, and traditions. They thought that he showed great disrespect to their religion, and to the rabbis who had commanded these services. He told them that he would heed every word that came from the mouth of God, and that they must show him from the Bible where he was in error. He pointed out to them the fact that they were placing the word of men above the word of God, and causing men to

The Child Life of Jesus

show disrespect to God through obeying the commands of men. The rabbis knew that there was nothing in the Scriptures that would uphold them in forcing him to obey their traditions.

They knew that he was far in advance of them in spiritual understanding, and that he lived a blameless life; yet they were angry with him because he would not violate his conscience by obeying their dictates. Failing to convince him that he ought to look upon human tradition as sacred, they came to Joseph and Mary, and complained that Jesus was taking a wrong course in regard to their customs and traditions.

Jesus knew what it was to have his family divided against him on account of his religious faith. He loved peace; he craved the love and confidence of the members of his family; but he knew what it was to have them withdraw their affection from him. He suffered rebuke and censure because he took a straightforward course, and would not do evil because others did evil, but was true to the commandments of Jehovah. His brethren rebuked him because he stood aloof from the ceremonies that were taught by the rabbis; for they regarded the word of man more highly than the word of God, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus made the Scriptures his constant study; and when the scribes and Pharisees tried to make him do as they did, and accept their doctrines, they found him ready to meet them with the word of God, and they could do nothing to convince him that they were right. He seemed to know the Scriptures from beginning to end, and repeated them in such a way that their true meaning shone out. They were ashamed because this little child knew more than they did. They claimed that he ought to obey them, and not go contrary to the teachings of the church. They said it was their business to explain the Scriptures, and that it was his place to accept what they said. They were angry that this child should dare to question their word, when it was their calling to study and explain the Scriptures.

The scribes, rabbis, and Pharisees could not force Jesus to turn from the word of God, and follow the traditions of men; but they could influence his brethren in such a way that his life might become a very bitter one. His brethren threatened him, and sought to compel him to take a wrong course; but he passed on, making the Scriptures his guide. From the time his parents found him in the temple, asking and answering questions among the doctors, they could not understand his course of action. Quiet and gentle, he seemed as one who was set apart. Whenever he could, he went out alone into the fields and on the mountain sides to commune with the God of nature. When his work was done, he wandered by the lakeside, among the trees of the forest, and in the green valleys where he could think about God, and lift his soul to heaven in prayer. After a season thus spent, he would return to his home to take up again the humble duties of his life, and to give to all an example of patient labor.

The Child Life of Jesus

Mrs. E. G. White.

Child Life of Jesus.--No. 4.

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Jesus loved children, and ever influenced them for good. He cared for the poor and needy even in his childhood. In every gentle, tender, and submissive way he sought to please those with whom he came in contact; but though so gentle and submissive, no one could lead him to do anything that was contrary to the word of God. Some admired his perfection of character, and often sought to be with him; but others who regarded the sayings of men more than the word of God, turned away from him, and avoided his company. Throughout his childhood and youth, he manifested the same perfection of character as marked his after life.

As Jesus looked upon the offerings that were brought as a sacrifice to the temple, the Holy Spirit taught him that his life was to be sacrificed for the life of the world. He grew up as a tender plant,--not in a large and noisy city, full of confusion and strife, but in the retired valleys and among the hills. From his earliest years he was guarded by heavenly angels; yet his life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. Satan sought in every way to tempt and try him. He caused men to misunderstand his words, so that they might not receive the salvation he came to bring them. He was opposed both at home and abroad, not because he was an evildoer, but because his life was free from every taint of sin, and condemned all impurity. He found his greatest happiness in communing with nature and with nature's God. He was faithful in obeying the commands of God, and this made him very different from those around him, who disregarded the word of God. His stainless life was a rebuke, and many avoided his presence; but there were some who sought to be with him because they felt at peace where he was. He was gentle, and never contended for his rights; but his own brethren scorned and hated him, showing that they did not believe in him, and casting contempt upon him. In his home life, where he should have found peace, he found only strife, envy, and jealousy. He loved his brethren, but they made his labors unnecessarily hard, because he was so willing and uncomplaining. He did not fail, nor become discouraged. He lived above the difficulties of his life, as if in the light of God's countenance. He bore insult patiently, and in his human nature became an example for all children and youth.

Christ showed the greatest respect and love for his mother. Though she often talked with him, and sought to have him do as his brethren desired him to do, he never showed her the least lack of devotion. His brethren could not cause him to change his habits of life. He knew there was nothing wrong in thinking about the works of God, in showing sympathy and tenderness toward the poor, the suffering, and the unfortunate. He sought to soothe the sufferings of both men and dumb animals.

The Child Life of Jesus

Mary had felt greatly troubled when the priests and rulers came to her to complain about Jesus; but peace and confidence came to her troubled heart as her son showed her what the Scriptures said about his practises. At times she wavered between Jesus and his brethren, who did not believe that he was sent of God; but she saw enough to show her that his was a divine character. She saw him giving his life for others, meeting the people where they were. She saw him growing in grace and knowledge, and in favor with God and man.

His life was as leaven, working amid the elements of society. Harmless and undefiled he walked amid the careless, the thoughtless, the rude, and unholy. He mingled with the unjust publicans, the reckless prodigals, the unrighteous Samaritans, the heathen soldiers, the rough peasants, and the mixed multitudes. He looked upon them all with pity and love. He addressed himself to them,--not for the purpose of discouraging and condemning them, but to present lessons to them that would be a savor of life unto life to those who should believe. He treated every human being as having great value. He taught men to look upon themselves as persons to whom had been given precious talents that if rightly used would elevate and ennoble them, and secure for them eternal riches. By his example and character he taught that every moment of life was precious, as a time in which to sow seed for eternity.

From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, Jesus worked out in his life the principle of the law of God. He weeded life of all vanities, and taught that it was to be cherished as a treasure, and be employed for holy purposes. He taught that character was precious, and that every moment of life was to be passed in the service of God in such a way as to be a saving salt to preserve society from moral corruption. Mrs. E. G. White.

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Christ passed no human being by as worthless and hopeless, but sought to apply the saving remedy to every soul who needed help. Wherever he was found, he had a lesson to present that was the right one for the time and circumstance. He sought to inspire with hope the most rough and unpromising, setting before them the idea that they might become blameless and harmless, and attain a character that would be Christlike. They could be the children of God, and shine as lights in the world, even though they lived among evil people. This was the reason that so many heard him gladly. From his very childhood he worked for others, letting his light shine amid the moral darkness of the world. In bearing burdens in his home life, and in laboring in more public fields, he showed men what the character of God is.

The Child Life of Jesus

He encouraged everything that had a bearing on the real interests of life; but he did not encourage the youth in dreaming of what would be in the future. He taught them by his words and by his example that the future would be decided by the way in which they spent the present. Our destiny is marked out by our own course of action. Those who cherish that which is right, who work out God's plan though it be in a narrow sphere of action, and who do right because it is right, will find wider fields of usefulness. Those who are true to God's holy commandments in a humble place, are fitting themselves to do service in some higher position. The Lord will bless them with views of eternity, will help them to purify and elevate their characters. They may be as conscious of the favor of God as was Christ.

The Jews thought themselves better than other people, and held themselves aloof from other nations; but Jesus mingled with all classes of people. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. The brethren of Christ were angry because he did not feel the same prejudice they felt against the poor and the outcast. They did not understand Jesus. Through childhood, youth, and manhood, Christ walked alone. In his purity, in his faithfulness, he trod the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with him.

It is our privilege now to act a part in the work and mission of Christ. We may be laborers together with him. In whatever work we are called to engage, we may work with Christ. He is doing all that he can to set us free, to make our lives that seem so cramped and narrow, reach out to bless and help others. He would have us understand that we are held responsible to do good, and have us realize that in shunning our work we are bringing loss upon ourselves. In his day he saw many that were falling far below what they might be in becoming useful. To those who were doing nothing, he said, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" We are to work while it is called today; for the night cometh in which no man can work.

Jesus carried the burden of the salvation of the human family upon his heart. He knew that unless men would receive him, and become changed in purpose and life, they would be eternally lost. This was the burden of his soul, and he was alone in carrying this load. No one knew how heavy was the weight that rested upon his heart; but from his youth he was filled with a deep longing to be a lamp in the world, and he purposed that his life should be "the light of the world." This he was, and that light still shines to all who are in darkness. Let us walk in the light which he has given.

Mrs. E. G. White.