

**THE NEW TESTAMENT
STORY, RETOLD FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE,
PART II, PP. 205-404**

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The New Testament Story, Retold for Young People, Part II, pp. 205-404 by W. F. Adeney

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W. F. ADENEY

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I

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

HOME LIFE AT NAZARETH

HIGH up among the wild hills of the country that was once called Galilee is a little town, built in a sort of cup or basin that seems to be scooped out of the face of the cliff. If you look at it across the great green plain below, when the sun is shining at noon on its white houses, this little town seems like a patch of snow left unmelted on the dull brown hills. If you climb the steep, winding path among the rocks—a very tiring scramble for a hot day—you will see that the houses are planted on any level bit of ground that can be found, so that when you go out of one house you almost step on the roof of another. There are no regular streets—only narrow lanes, and in some places flights of stone steps leading from house to house. This is Nazareth. At the time of Jesus it was a larger and more important place than it is to-day.

Many hundreds of years ago there lived at Nazareth a kind, quiet man named Joseph, and Mary his

good and gentle wife. They were poor, and they had to work hard for their living. Joseph was a carpenter; and while he was in his workshop, Mary would have to busy herself about the house, keeping the place clean and tidy, sewing and mending clothes, baking bread. She would not have much cooking to do: they would live very simply, for the most part on such food as bread and figs, dates and honey and curdled milk and, perhaps, a little fish when the hawkers brought it through the town, and, as a treat, some meat on feast days. Every morning and again every evening, Mary would go down to the well, a spring breaking out of the rock. She would carry her pitcher on her head. At the well she would meet other women of the town who were too poor to keep servants, going to and fro with their pitchers of water. On washing days, she would carry her linen to the stream running out from the well, and rinse it in the sparkling water that splashed among the stones.

There were several boys and girls in the carpenter's cottage. Jesus was the eldest. He was Mary's firstborn. We know that He was also the Son of God. But, when he came into the world as a little baby, He must have looked like any other little baby. His mother had to feed Him and care for Him. If she had not done so, He would have died. But in time He grew tall and strong, as boys will grow. His mind, too, grew wiser, and He came to know more and more as He grew older. Every year He



WOMAN CARRYING CHILD ON SHOULDER



lived the neighbours learnt to love Him more kindly, and every year He lived God smiled on Him more brightly, so that His heart was full of joy, and His life was full of sweetness.

You may be sure that when He was quite a little boy He could climb the rocks round His home; for He was always strong and active and healthy, and He loved the mountain heights. Then, as He wandered over the countryside, many a lovely sight would fill His soul with wonder and with praise to His Father in heaven, who had made all things so beautiful. In spring hosts of flowers came up after the rain — the brightest of them, the blood-red anemones, scattered over the hills like spots of flame. Perhaps green and gold lizards — of which there are many — would dart out from under the rocks, or peep at Him with their bead-like eyes. In ten minutes He could reach the hill-top. There He would have a grand view of snow mountains, and the blue sea with the ships at anchor in the bay, and miles of hill and dale between. Crowning a hill quite near He would see a fortress, with its stern, frowning walls.

A high road from the port to the far-off city of Damascus passed through Nazareth, and the boy Jesus would often see troops of merchants with their wares on camels' backs; some of them would open their bales in the market-place, and offer their goods for sale.

We are not told how Jesus was taught, but no

doubt it was with Him as with other cottage lads. If so, when He was very young He would learn to read and write from lessons given Him by His parents at home. His lesson book would be the Old Testament, which was the Jews' Bible. When He was about five years old, as we may suppose, He was sent to school at the synagogue; that is the Jewish place of worship, like our church or chapel. This place was used for services on Saturday (the Sabbath of the Jews), and for week-day services on Monday and Wednesday. At other times it was used for meetings, and for school-teaching. The school-teaching was very simple. Jesus never went to college, as Paul did. His best lessons He got from the Bible, from God's book of nature in the lovely scenes round His home, and from the Spirit of God in His own heart.

When He was old enough, Jesus went to work in the carpenter's shop, and thus He became Himself a carpenter. For fifteen years or more He worked with hammer and saw and plane. An old writer, who lived in the next century, says He used to make ploughs and yokes. Depend upon it, He made them well — His ploughs, smooth and true, so that the ploughmen would have no excuse to turn back grumbling and complaining; and His yokes easy, so as not to gall the shoulders of the poor patient oxen. In this way He lived till He was thirty years old. To His neighbours He seemed to be an ordinary working-man. And yet, though