

The Birth of Mary

For many thousands of years people had been waiting for the Savior whom God promised to Adam and Eve. Many prophets, like Elijah, received messages from God about Him. Now at last the time was at hand when the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, was to be born.

At this time there lived not far from the great city of Jerusalem an old man and his wife. They were called Joachim and Anna. They were both very good and very kind and loved each other tenderly. But Joachim and Anna were very unhappy about one thing. They were both growing old and still had no children. They did not grumble or complain as many people would have done. Instead, they prayed very hard that God would give them a child. Anna made a promise that if she had a baby she would bring it up to serve God.

A little baby girl was born to Joachim and Anna. God had answered Anna's prayer, and they were very happy. They called the baby Mary. She seemed to them to be the loveliest baby they had ever seen. As Mary grew, she made her parents happier and happier because she was so lovely and good.

Joachim and Anna did not forget their promise to God. They knew too that they were old and would not live long. They did not want Mary to remain alone in the world so one day they took Mary to the beautiful temple in Jerusalem. At this time Mary was only three years old.

You remember the beautiful temple in David's city: its mighty stone walls; its beautiful gold ornaments; its precious stones; and the heavy carved wooden doors. The first temple, built by Solomon, had been destroyed, but another one was built in its place. Around this temple there was a great yard. In this yard there were buildings where the people who took care of the temple lived. Some of the women and young girls spent all of their time taking care of the beautiful things in the temple. The little girls learned to sew, embroider, and to read the holy books.

Within the temple there was a place where no one could enter. This place was called the Holy of Holies. Only the eldest of all the priests, who was called the high priest, could go in there just once each year.

There was a great celebration the day Joachim and Anna took Mary to the temple. All their friends and relatives with their children had come with them. Each person carried a lighted candle in his hand. They reached the great stone steps leading to the temple and stopped there. At the top of the stone steps stood the high priest. Little three-year-old Mary walked up these steps all by herself and put her hand into the hand of the high priest.

Then something happened that made Mary's parents and all their friends wonder even more. The high priest took her hand and led her into the Holy of Holies, the place where no one could enter and where he himself entered only once a year.

When Mary's parents and family went home that day, they still wondered why the high priest had done this and what it could mean.