

Infancy Gospel of Thomas

as translated by Harold Attridge & Ronald F. Hock in the book
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Boyhood deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ

1 I, Thomas the Israelite, am reporting to you, all my non-Jewish brothers and sisters, to make known the extraordinary childhood deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ - what he did after his birth in my region. This is how it all started:

2 When this boy, Jesus, was five years old, he was playing at the ford of a rushing stream. (2) He was collecting the flowing water into ponds and made the water instantly pure. He did this with a single command. (3) He then made soft clay and shaped it into twelve sparrows. He did this on the sabbath day, and many other boys were playing with him.

(4)But when a Jew saw what Jesus was doing while playing on the sabbath day, he immediately went off and told Joseph, Jesus' father: "See here, your boy is at the ford and has taken mud and fashioned twelve birds with it, and so has violated the sabbath."

(5)So Joseph went there, and as soon as he spotted him he shouted, "Why are you doing what's not permitted on the sabbath?"

(6)But Jesus simply clapped his hands and shouted to the sparrows: "Be off, fly away, and remembe' me, you who are now alive!" And the sparrows took off and flew away noisily.

(7)The Jews watched with amazement, then left the scene to report to their leaders what they had seen Jesus doing.

3 The son of Annas the scholar, standing there with Jesus, took a willow branch and drained the water Jesus had collected. (2)Jesus, however, saw what had happened and became angry, saying to him, "Damn you, you irreverent fool! What harm did the ponds of water do to you? From this moment you, too, will dry up like a tree, and you'll never produce leaves or root or bear fruit."

(3) In an instant the boy had completely withered away. Then Jesus departed and left for the house of Joseph. (4)The parents of the boy who had withered away picked him up and were carrying him out, sad because he was so young. And they came to Joseph and accused him: "It's your fault - your boy did this."

4 Later he was going through the village again when a boy ran and bumped him on the shoulder. Jesus got angry and said to him, "You won't continue your journey." (2)And all of a sudden, he fell down and died.

(3)Some people saw what had happened and said, "Where has this boy come from? Everything he says happens instantly!"

(4)The parents of the dead boy came to Joseph and blamed him saying, "Because you have such a boy, you can't live with us in the village, or else teach him to bless and not curse. He's killing our children!"

5 So Joseph summoned his child and admonished him in private, saying, "Why are you doing all this? These people are suffering and so they hate and harass us." (2)Jesus said, "I know that these

are not your words, still, I'll keep quiet for your sake. But those people must take their punishment." There and then his accusers became blind.

(3)Those who saw this became very fearful and at a loss. All they could say was, "Every word he says, whether good or bad, has become a deed - a miracle even!" (4)When Joseph saw that Jesus had done such a thing, he got angry and grabbed his ear and pulled very hard. (5)The bot became infuriated with him and replied, "It's one thing for you to seek and not find; it's quite another for you to act this unwisely. (6)Don't you know that I don't really belong to you? Don't make me upset."

6 A teacher by the name of Zacchaeus was listening to everything Jesus was saying to Joseph, and was astonished, saying to himself, "He is just a child, and saying this!" (2)And so he summoned Joseph and said to him, "You have a bright child, and he has a good mind. Hand him over to me so he can learn his letters. I'll teach him everything he needs to know so as not to be unruly."

(3)Joseph replied, "No one is able to rule this child except God alone. Don't consider him to be a small cross, brother."

(4)When Jesus heard Joseph saying this he laughed and said to Zacchaeus, "Believe me, teacher, what my father told you is true. (5)I am the Lord of these people and I'm present with you and have been born among you and am with you. (6)I know where you've come from and how many years you'll live. I swear to you, teacher, I existed when you were born. If you wish to be a perfect teacher, listen to me and I'll teach you a wisdom that no one else knows except for me and the one who sent me to you. (7)It's you who happens to be my student, and I know how old you are and how long you have to live. (8)When you see the cross that my father mentioned, then you'll believe that everything I've told you is true."

(9)The Jews who were standing by and heard Jesus marveled and said, "How strange and paradoxical! This child is barely five years old and yet he says such things. In fact, we've never heard anyone say the kind of thing this child does."

(10)Jesus said to them in reply, "Are you really so amazed? Rather, consider what I've said to you. The truth is that I also know when you were born, and your parents, and I announce this paradox to you: when the world was created, I existed along with the one who sent me to you."

(11)The Jews, once they heard that the child was speaking like this, became angry but were unable to say anything in reply. (12)But the child skipped forward and said to them, "I've made fun of you because I know that your tiny minds marvel at trifles."

(13)When, therefore, they thought that they were being comforted by the child's exhortation, the teacher said to Joseph, "Bring him to the classroom and I'll teach him the alphabet."

(14)Joseph took him by the hand and led him to the classroom. (15)The teacher wrote the alphabet for him and began the instruction by repeating the letter alpha many times. But the child was quiet and did not answer him for a long time. (16)No wonder, then, that the teacher got angry and struck him on the head. The child took the blow calmly and replied to him, "I'm teaching you rather than you're teaching me, and your condemnation is great. To you these letters are like a bronze pitcher or a clashing cymbal, which can't produce glory or wisdom because it's all just noise. (17)Nor does anyone understand the extent of my wisdom." (18)When he got over being angry he recited the letters from alpha to omega very quickly.

(19)Then he looked at the teacher and told him, "Since you don't know the real nature of the letter alpha, how are you going to teach the letter beta? (20)You impostor, if you know, teach me first the letter alpha and then I'll trust you with the letter beta." (21)He began to quiz the teacher

about the first letter, but he was unable to say anything.

(22)Then while many were listening, he said to Zacchaeus, "Listen, teacher, and observe the arrangement of the first letter: (23)How it has two straight lines or strokes proceeding to a point in the middle, gathered together, elevated, dancing, three-cornered, two-cornered, not antagonistic, of the same family, providing the alpha has lines of equal measure."

7 After Zacchaeus the teacher had heard the child expressing such intricate allegories regarding the first letter, he despaired of defending his teaching. (2)He spoke to those who were present: "Poor me, I'm utterly bewildered, wretch that I am. I've heaped shame on myself because I took on this child. (3)So take him away, I beg you, brother Joseph. I can't endure the severity of his look or his lucid speech. (4)This child is no ordinary mortal; he can even tame fire! Perhaps he was born before the creation of the world. (5)What sort of womb bore him, what sort of mother nourished him? -I don't know. (6)Poor me, friend, I've lost my mind. (7)I've decided myself, I who am wholly wretched. I strove to get a student, and I've been found to have a teacher. (8)Friends, I think of the shame, because, although I'm an old man, I've been defeated by a mere child. (9)And so I can only despair and die on account of this child; right now I can't look him in the face. (10)When everybody says that I've been defeated by a small child, what can I say? And what can I report about the lines of the first letter which he told me about? I just don't know, friends. For I don't know its beginning or its end. (11)Therefore, I ask you, brother Joseph, take him back to your house. What great thing he is - god or angel or whatever else I might call him - I don't know."

8 While the Jews were advising Zacchaeus, the child laughed loudly and said, "Now let the infertile bear fruit and the blind see and the deaf in the understanding of their heart hear: (2)I've come from above so that I might save those who are below and summon them to higher things, just as the one who sent me to you commanded me."

(3)When the child stopped speaking, all those who had fallen under the curse were instantly saved. (4)And from then on no one dared to anger him for fear of being cursed and maimed for life.

9 A few days later Jesus was playing on the roof of a house when one of the children playing with him fell off the roof and died. When the other children saw what had happened, they fled, leaving Jesus standing all by himself.

(2)The parents of the dead child came and accused Jesus: "You troublemaker you, you're the one who threw him down."

(3)Jesus responded, "I didn't throw him down - he threw himself down. He just wasn't being careful and leaped down from the roof and died."

(4)Then Jesus himself leaped down from the roof and stood by the body of the child and shouted in a loud voice: "Zeno!" - that was his name - "Get up and tell me: Did I push you?"

(5)He got up immediately and said, "No, Lord, you didn't push me, you raised me up."

(6)Those who saw this were astonished, and the child's parents praised God for the miracle that had happened and worshipped Jesus.

10 A few days later a young man was splitting wood in the neighborhood when his axe slipped and cut off the bottom of his foot. He was dying from the loss of blood.

(2)The crowd rushed there in an uproar, and the boy Jesus ran up, too. He forced his way through

the crowd and grabbed hold of the young man's wounded foot. It was instantly healed.

(3)He said to the youth, "Get up now, split your wood, and remember me."

(4)The crowd saw what had happened and worshipped the child, saying, "Truly the spirit of God dwells in this child."

11 When he was six years old, his mother sent him to draw water and bring it back to the house.

(2)But he lost his grip on the picture in the jostling of the crowd, and it fell and broke. (3)So Jesus spread out the cloak he was wearing and filled it with water and carried it back to his mother.

(4)His mother, once she saw the miracle that had occurred, kissed him; but she kept to herself the mysteries that she had seen him do.

12 Again, during the sowing season, the child went out with his father to sow their field with grain. While his father was sowing, the child Jesus sowed one measure of grain. (2)When he had harvested and threshed it, it yielded one hundred measures. (3)Then he summoned all the poor in the village to the threshing floor and gave them grain. Joseph carried back what was left of the grain. (4)Jesus was eight years old when he did this miracle.

13 Now Jesus' father was a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes at that time. He received an order from a rich man to make a bed for him. (2)When one board of what is called the crossbeam turned out to be shorter than the other, and Joseph didn't know what to do, the child Jesus said to his father, "Put the two boards down and line them up at one end."

(3)Joseph did as the child told him. Jesus stood at the other end and grabbed hold of the shorter board, and, by stretching it, made it the same length as the other.

(4)His father Joseph looked on and marveled, and he hugged and kissed the child, saying, "How fortunate I am that God has given this child to me."

14 When Joseph saw the child's aptitude, and his great intelligence for his age, he again resolved that Jesus should not remain illiterate. So he took him and handed him over to another teacher.

(2)The teacher said to Joseph, "First I'll teach him Greek, then Hebrew." This teacher, of course, knew of the child's previous experience (with a teacher) and was afraid of him. Still, he wrote out the alphabet and instructed him for quite a while, though Jesus was unresponsive.

(3)Then Jesus spoke: "If you're really a teacher, and if you know the letters well, tell me the meaning of the letter alpha, and I'll tell you the meaning of beta."

(4)The teacher became exasperated and hit him on the head. Jesus got angry and cursed him, and the teacher immediately lost consciousness and fell facedown on the ground.

(5)The Child returned to Joseph's house. But Joseph was upset and gave instruction to his mother: "Don't let him go outside, because those who annoy him end up dead."

15 After some time another teacher, a close friend of Joseph, said to him, "Send the child to my schoolroom. Perhaps with some flattery I can teach him his letters."

(2)Joseph replied, "If you can muster the courage, brother, take him with you." And so he took him along with much fear and trepidation, but the child was happy to go.

(3)Jesus strode boldly into the schoolroom and found a book lying on the desk. He took the book but did not read the letters in it. Rather, he opened his mouth and spoke by (the power of) the holy spirit and taught the law to those standing there.

(4)A large crowd gathered and stood listening to him, and they marveled at the maturity of his teaching and his readiness of speech - a mere child able to say such things.

(5)When Joseph heard about this he feared the worst and ran to the schoolroom, imagining that this teacher was having trouble with Jesus.

(6)But the teacher said to Joseph, "Brother, please know that I accepted this child as a student, but already he's full of grace and wisdom. So I'm asking you, brother, to take him back home."

(7)When the child heard this, he immediately smiled at him and said, "Because you have spoken and testified rightly, that other teacher who was struck down will be healed." And right away he was. Joseph took his child and went home.

16 Joseph sent James to tie up some wood and carry it back to the house, and the child Jesus followed. While James was gathering the firewood, a viper bit his hand. (2)And as he lay sprawled out on the ground, dying, Jesus came and blew on the bite. Immediately the pain stopped, the animal burst apart, and James got better on the spot.

17 After this incident an infant in Joseph's neighborhood became sick and died, and his mother grieved terribly. Jesus heard the loud wailing and the uproar that was going on and quickly ran there.

(2)When he found the child dead, he touched its chest and said, "I say to you, infant, don't die but live, and be with your mother."

(3)And immediately the infant looked up and laughed. Jesus then said to the woman, "Take it, give it your breast, and remember me."

(4)The crowd of onlookers marveled at this: "Truly this child was a god or a heavenly messenger of God - whatever he says instantly happens." But Jesus left and went on playing with the other children.

18 A year later, while a building was under construction, a man fell from the top of it and died. There was quite a commotion, so Jesus got up and went there. (2)When he saw the man lying dead, he took his hand and said, "I say to you, sir, get up and go back to work." And he immediately got up and worshipped him.

(3)The crowd saw this and marveled: "This child's from heaven - he must be, because he has saved many souls from death, and he can go on saving all his life."

19 When he was twelve years old his parents went to Jerusalem, as usual, for the Passover festival, along with the their fellow travelers. (2)After Passover they began the journey home. But while on their way, the child Jesus went back up to Jerusalem. His parents, of course, assumed that he was in the traveling party. (3)After they had traveled one day, they began to look for him among their relatives. When they did not find him, they were worried and returned again to the city to search for him.

(4)After three days they found him in the temple area, sitting among the teachers, listening to the law and asking them questions. (5)All eyes were on him, and everyone was astounded that he, a mere child, could interrogate the elders and teachers of the people and explain the main points of the law and the parables of the prophets.

(6)His mother Mary came up and said to him, "Child, why have you done this to us? Don't you see, we've been worried sick looking for you."

(7)"Why were you looking for me?" Jesus said to them. "Don't you know that I have to be in my

father's house?"

(8)Then the scholars and Pharisees said, "Are you the mother of this child?"

(9)She said, "I am."

(10)And they said to her, "You more than any woman are to be congratulated, for God has blessed the fruit of your womb! For we've never seen nor heard such glory and such virtue and wisdom."

(11)Jesus got up and went to his mother, and was obedient to his parents. His mother took careful note of all that had happened. (12)And Jesus continued to excel in learning and gain respect.

(13)To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.