

The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

A word about Luke: Luke's name never appears in this gospel, but Christian tradition unanimously ascribes the book to him. Ancient manuscripts identify Luke as the writer of his Gospel and the book of Acts (St. Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*, the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to the Gospels, and the *Muratorian Canon*) describe Luke as a Syrian from Antioch who eventually settled in Thebes and died at 84. He was a physician and companion of Paul on several of his missionary journeys as is evidenced by the 'we' sections of the book of Acts.

These place the author with Paul during his initial mission into Greece—i.e., as far as Philippi, in Macedonia (c. 51). It is there that Luke later rejoins Paul and accompanies him on his final journey to Jerusalem (c. 58). After Paul's arrest in that city and during his extended detention in nearby Caesarea, Luke may have spent considerable time in Palestine working with the apostle as the occasion allowed and gathering materials for his future two-volume literary work, the Gospel and the Acts. In any case, two years later he appears with Paul on his prison voyage from Caesarea to Rome and again, according to the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy 4:11, at the time of the apostle's martyrdom in the imperial city (c. 66).

His medical skills, like Paul's tentmaking, may have contributed to his livelihood while ministering with Paul. Luke was probably not Jewish. Paul listed him with other Gentiles in his greetings to the Colossians (4:11-14).

Luke's introduction to his gospel indicates that he composed the letter with the purpose of providing a careful rendering of the events of Christ's life in chronological order. As a physician, Luke would have been trained as a careful observer, a quality that would have been invaluable in this project or providing Theophilus (Acts 1:1) with substantial proof about Christianity.

Introduction

Luke records the birth of Jesus. His Gospel can be viewed in four sections:

- 1 – Preparation – 1-3
- 2 – Identification – 4-8
- 3 – Instruction – 9-18
- 4 – Sacrifice – 19-24

Luke 2 can also be divided into four sections:

- 1 – The Birth of Jesus – 2:1-7
- 2 – Shepherds and Angels – 2:8-20
- 3 – Jesus presented in the Temple – 2:21-40
- 4 – Jesus as a Boy in the Temple – 2:41-52

(Since we are discussing Jesus’s birth and have only 3 Wednesdays, we will only get through verse 20).

Under Caesar Augustus, who ruled from about 27 BC–AD 14, the Roman Empire reached the zenith of its military, cultural, and economic influence. Augustus ushered in what has been called the *Pax Romana*, an era of great stability and peace because of the reach of the Roman Empire. It is surely no accident of history that Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was born in an era of peace that lasted only for a few decades.

In the period of the emperor known for his reign of peace, God raises up the child of peace. For many interpreters, Luke is not only placing Jesus’ birth in the context of world history, but he also is making a play on the theme of the peaceful emperor. The real emperor of peace is Jesus, not Octavian.

Jesus’s Genealogy

Much of the Old Testament looks forward to the restoration of Israel after Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. One key to this fulfilled prophecy is Davidic king who would reign forever in perfect holiness and justice. (Isaiah 9:1-7 & 11:1-11).

We know the king to be Jesus. When Titus razed Jerusalem in 70 AD, all family records were lost. Jesus of Nazareth is the last known person whose lineage can be traced back to David, making him the only fit candidate for the throne of Israel.

The New Testament provides two accounts of the genealogy of Jesus, one in the Gospel of Matthew and another in the Gospel of Luke. Matthew starts with Abraham, while Luke begins with Adam. The lists are identical between Abraham and David but differ radically from that point. Matthew has twenty-seven generations from David to Joseph, whereas Luke has forty-two, with almost no overlap between the names on the two lists. Why are they different? Matthew follows the lineage of Joseph while Luke’s traces Mary’s ancestors. As the Seed of the woman, Messiah had to come out of humanity. As the Seed of Abraham, Messiah had to come from the nation of Israel. As the Seed of Judah, he had to be of the tribe of Judah. As the Seed of David, he had to be of the family of David.

At the time of Jesus’s birth, ample genealogical evidence was available to check a Hebrew’s historical background. Such would be crucial in determining whether Christ had the necessary “genealogical pedigree” to establish his ancestry. If these records were not available, any attempt to argue for the Lord’s messiahship on the ground of Old Testament prophecy—at least pertaining to his ancestry—falls flat. The fact is, however, those genealogical records

substantially vanished when the Romans slaughtered and/or dispersed the Hebrew populace in A.D. 70.

Accordingly, no modern Jew could possibly argue that he is the promised Messiah, based upon the prophecies cited above, since he would be unable to establish his lineage from David.

“The [Hebrew] Rabbis affirm that after the [Babylonian] Captivity the Jews were most careful in keeping their pedigrees. Since, however, the period of their destruction as a nation by the Romans, all their tables of descent seem to be lost, and now they are utterly unable to trace the pedigree of any one who might lay claim to be their promised Messiah”

The McClintock & Strong Cyclopedia

When Luke, an “unsurpassed” historian, wrote his Gospel account, he recorded a genealogical catalog reaching from Christ back to Adam. Where did he obtain his information? He obviously did not interview the ancients personally! Clearly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he consulted written documents still in existence.

Numerous genealogical documents were available in Israel during the days of Christ and for Luke to research. In A.D. 70 that changed! After a five-month siege, the Romans broke through the walls of the sacred city and burned it to the ground. The date was September 7, A.D. 70. Josephus, a Jewish historian, claimed that 1,100,000 Hebrews were killed, and that another 97,000 were captured and carried away into slavery

V 1

*In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that all the world should be registered.*

- a) Caesar Augustus was 19 years old when he came to power in 44 B.C. He reigned as emperor for 58 years. His greatest single act—the one which would have the most lasting effect on world history—was to call for a census of the empire.

When Octavius, renamed CA, began his rule, the Roman Senate gave him the title Augustus, which means majestic one, highly honored one. It was a term reserved for the gods. Augustus declared Julius Caesar, his adopted father, to be god, which made him the son of God. This was his official title on the coinage of Rome during his lifetime. If anyone asked, “Who is the son of God?” the official answer was Augustus. And it is during the reign of this self-proclaimed ‘son of god’ that the true Son of God is born. Talk about “the fulness of time” (Gal 4:4).

Caesar Augustus was ruling, but God was in charge. He used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to fulfill His Word.

- b) The purpose of the census was to compile a list of property owners for the purpose of collecting taxes and military registration. It was a thoroughly secular decree; the kind of thing governments have been doing since the beginning of time. Historians tell us that it is not likely that the whole empire was enrolled at the same time.

- c) Given the slow system of communication in those days, it might have taken years for the census to be completed in some of the outlying provinces. A lot would depend on the local political situation and the willingness of local rulers to cooperate.
- d) The Romans ordinarily enrolled men where they were currently living, while the Jews counted families according to their ancestral hometowns. That would explain why Joseph and Mary had to return to Bethlehem at a most inconvenient time—in the ninth month of Mary’s pregnancy. v 3

It was “Critical that Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem, which was their own city, so that they would be there when the Messiah was born so the prophecy of Micah would come to pass. Little did Caesar Augustus know that he was being moved by the Spirit of God to do exactly what he did on time, on schedule to affect exactly the result God wanted. There was a few days in which Joseph and Mary had to be in Bethlehem, right at the very time of the birth of the child. God knew exactly when that moment was, exactly when that day was. He knew when they had to be there, and He had planned for that to happen under the authority and power of a Caesar who was far removed from the little village of Bethlehem and utterly removed from the purposes of God and utterly ignorant of the Word of God. But nonetheless he was a main player in bringing the prophecy to pass, which shows the mighty, incomprehensible, providential work of Almighty God.”

John MacArthur

Proverbs 21:1 - *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

Augustus was assassinated in 14 A.D. he died and was succeeded by Caesar Tiberius who was the Caesar through the latter life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

This we know: there are no accidents in history. Time is ‘his story’ being played out under the watch care of the only true sovereign, the Christian God.

When was Jesus born?

The biblical details of Jesus’ birth are found in the Gospels. Matthew 2:1 states that Jesus was born during the days of Herod the king. Since Herod died in 4 B.C., we have a parameter to work with. Further, after Joseph and Mary fled Bethlehem with Jesus, Herod ordered all the boys 2 years old and younger in that vicinity killed. This indicates that Jesus could have been as old as 2 before Herod’s death. This gives the date of His birth between 6 and 4 B.C.

Luke 2:1–2 notes several other facts to ponder: We know that Caesar Augustus reigned from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. Quirinius governed Syria during this same time period, with records of a census that included Judea in approximately 6 B.C. Some scholars debate whether this is the census mentioned by Luke, but it does appear to be the same event. Based on these historical details, the most likely time of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem is 6–5 B.C.

Luke mentions another detail concerning our timeline: “Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23). Jesus began His ministry during the time John the Baptist ministered in the wilderness, and John’s ministry started “in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas” (Luke 3:1–2).

The only time period that fits all of these facts is A.D. 27–29. If Jesus was “about thirty years of age” by A.D. 27, a birth sometime between 6 and 4 B.C. would fit the chronology. More specifically, Jesus would have been approximately 32 years old at the time He began His ministry (still “about thirty years of age”).

What about the day of Christ’s birth? The tradition of December 25 was developed long after the New Testament period. It’s the day Christians have agreed to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but the exact day of His birth is unknown.

Roman Emperors of the New Testament

- **Augustus** (27 B.C.–A.D. 14) Ordered the census that involved Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1)
- **Tiberius** (A.D. 14–37) Jesus ministered and was crucified under his reign (Luke 3:1; 20:22, 25; 23:2; John 19:12, 15)
- **Caligula** (A.D. 37–41)
- **Claudius** (A.D. 41–54) An extensive famine occurred in his reign (Acts 11:28). He expelled Jews from Rome, including Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2).
- **Nero** (A.D. 54–68) He persecuted Christians, including the martyrdoms of Paul and Peter. He is the Caesar to whom Paul appealed for a fair trial (Acts 25:8, 10–12, 21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19).
- **Galba** (A.D. 68–69)
- **Otho** (A.D. 69)
- **Vitellius** (A.D. 69)
- **Vespasian** (A.D. 69–79) Crushed the Jewish revolt, and his son Titus destroyed the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70.

V 2

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria

Apparently *Quirinius* was governor of Syria twice: from 4 B.C. to A.D. 1, when this census was taken, and again in A.D. 6–10. The “first census” mentioned in Luke 2:2 occurred during his first term as governor, and another was ordered during his second term as governor mentioned in Acts 5:37, which probably took place between AD 6–7 (Josephus links this census to an uprising under Judas of Galilee).

Syria was the large Roman province of which Judea was part. The capital was Antioch. Under this administration came smaller political divisions such as Judea, which was ruled by Pilate at Jerusalem from A.D. 26 to 36.

Of note: Actually, Quintilius Varus was governor of Syria from about 7 B.C. to about 4 B.C. Varus was not a trustworthy leader, a fact that was disastrously demonstrated in A.D. 9 when he lost three legions of soldiers in the Teutoburger forest in Germany. But Quirinius was a notable military leader who was responsible for squelching the rebellion of the Homonadensians in Asia Minor. When it came time to begin the census, Augustus entrusted Quirinius with the delicate problem in the volatile area of Palestine, effectively superseding the authority and governorship of Varus by appointing Quirinius to a place of special authority in this matter.

V 3

And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

“registered” = “apographo = to write

Hebrews 12:22-23 - But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven

How far is it from Nazareth to Bethlehem? If you're in Pennsylvania, it's about 9 miles and takes about 10 minutes by car. But if you're in Nazareth of Galilee, and you're traveling along with your pregnant wife, as Joseph was, it's about 80 miles to Bethlehem.

But the journey for the infant Jesus was much farther than 80 miles. He left His place in heaven at God's right hand, came to earth, and accepted our humanity. Eventually, He was stretched out on a cross to die, and He was buried in a borrowed tomb. But the journey was not over. He conquered death, left the tomb, walked again among men, and ascended to heaven. Even that is not the journey's end. Someday He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

V 4

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

This is a reference to the fact that the genealogical records of families in Judah were traditionally kept in their ancestral hometowns. Rome was not just seeking to determine how many people lived in Judah but wanted to assure that all paid their taxes!

Taxation followed his lineage, so Joseph obediently traveled the 80 miles to Bethlehem, David's home, where the Scriptures said Messiah would be born

Bethlehem was 2,564 feet above sea level, so travelers from Nazareth which is (1,830 feet above sea level) would go up.

A traveler always “goes up” to Jerusalem (Lk 2:22; 18:31; 19:28; Acts 11:2; 13:31; 15:2; 21:12, 15; 25:1, 9) and “goes down” from Jerusalem (10:30; Acts 11:27; 25:7) because Jerusalem lies 2,500 feet above sea level.

Micah 5:2 – (8th century) - *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

- a) *From you shall come forth for me - birth*
- b) *One who is to be ruler in Israel – second coming*

Bethlehem was also called Ephrathah or Bethlehem-Judah to distinguish it from a second Bethlehem located in the Zebulite territory.

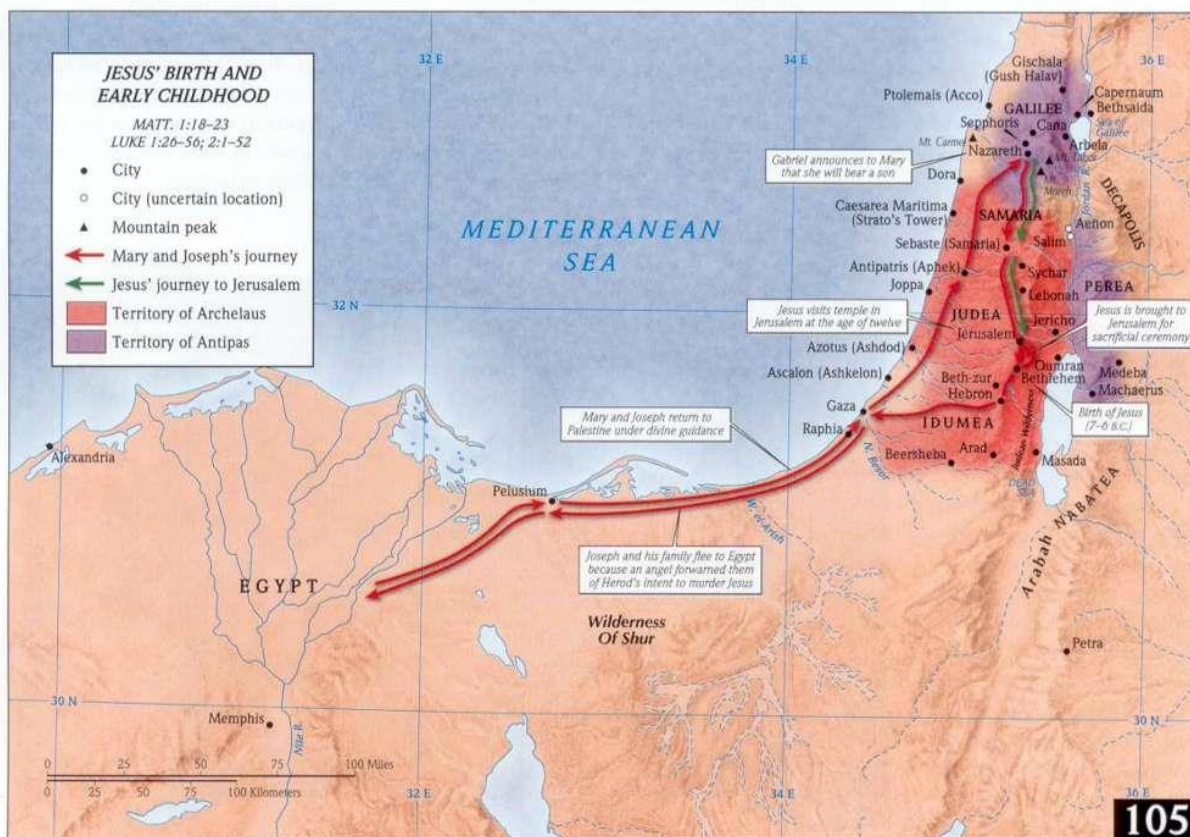
Bethlehem is located about five miles south of Jerusalem near the chief north-south route linking Jerusalem with Hebron and the Negeb (desert). The word *Bethlehem* means "house of bread," and its significance lies in the fact that it is located in a fertile region characterized by an abundance of corn (for making bread), as well as figs, vines, almonds, and olives.

- a) Jacob’s wife, Rachel was buried in Bethlehem. Gen 35:19-20
- b) Elimelech and Naomi left Bethlehem and Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem
- c) Saul was born there. 1 Sam 9:1
- d) David was born and anointed as king there. 1 Sam 16

By calling Bethlehem the city of David, Luke may be highlighting Jesus’ opposition to the Jewish and Roman powers in Jerusalem. He reminds his readers that David didn’t come from a place of great power, but from a little town known as least of all the cities of Judah (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6). The true “Anointed One” would come from there and be more associated with people like the shepherds of Bethlehem.

The Messiah would stand up against the wealth, power and corruption of Jerusalem and would rule with justice and equity, not favoring the “haves” but blessing the “have-nots.”

In the words of his mother Mary, through this child from Bethlehem the Lord “*has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away*” (Luke 1:46-53).



V 5

to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Betrothed = *mnesteuo* = *to remember* = *engaged* - *Mnesteuo* is used only in the passive voice in the NT and means to be promised in marriage, to be betrothed, to become engaged. *Mnesteuo* is used in the NT only in Mt 1:18 (betrothed), Lk 1:27 and Lk 2:5. As used in by these writers, *mnesteuo* described a legally binding agreement, unlike the sense of engagement as used today.

Probably the ceremony of betrothal in NT times involved the following acts:

- a contract drawn up by the parents or by the friend of the bridegroom.
- the two families met with other witnesses, at which time the groom gave the bride a gift like jewelry (Gen. 24:53) and declared his intention to observe the terms of the contract already arranged.
- the payment of the *mohar*, a price paid for a wife to her parents, (Genesis 34:12; Exodus 22:16; 1 Samuel 18:25).

In the OT and NT, this betrothal practically provided the same status as that of married persons, although it was generally customary for the wedding ceremony to be celebrated at a later date. Separation of betrothed persons demanded a divorce, and there seems to have been no taboo in their living together as man and wife previous to the wedding ceremony. The children of such a union would be regarded as legitimate.

Insofar as the virgin Mary and Joseph are concerned, the use of the verb *mnēsteúomai*, to betroth (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5), indicates a betrothal ceremony. There is no mention, however, of a subsequent wedding ceremony. It was during this period of betrothal that the angel appeared to Mary (Matt. 1:18).

It is clearly stated, however, that the angel appeared to announce to Mary her conception by the Holy Spirit before she had intimate relations with Joseph. The same angel also appeared to Joseph to tell him of the supernatural conception of his betrothed, Mary (Matt. 1:24; see Luke 1:26ff.).

Matthew 1:18-24 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Hosea 2:19-20 “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.

“the term emphasizes the intensity of God’s restoring love for the nation. In that day, Israel will no longer be thought of as a prostitute. Israel brings nothing to the marriage; God makes all the promises and provides all the dowry. These verses are recited by every orthodox Jew as he places the phylacteries on his hand and forehead (cf. Dt 11:18). “

John MacArthur

V 6

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

While Joseph and Mary were at Bethlehem. Here we see another evidence of the providence of God orchestrating all the events in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4) and the perfect fulfillment of OT prophecy. The statement as made by Luke conveys the thought that without any planning on the part of Joseph or of Mary her time came just after they had been in Bethlehem for a time.

We often think that Mary was close to delivery when they made this journey, but this may not have been the case at all. Joseph may have been anxious to get her out of Nazareth to avoid the pressure of scandal.

We know that after Gabriel's announcement, Mary visited Elizabeth, her cousin, and stayed there for the first three months of her pregnancy (Luke 1:39 & 56)

Luke 1:39 – *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah*

Luke 1:56 - *And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.*

It was after she returned home that the census reached Nazareth –

Luke 2:1 - *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.*

According to the Roman law, Mary didn't have to go with Joseph for the tax census; but it made sense for her to go with Joseph, especially because she was in the latter stages of a controversial pregnancy – surely the subject of much gossip in Nazareth. It is possible that he used the emperor's order as a means of removing Mary from possible gossip and emotional stress in her own village. He had already accepted her as his wife (Matthew 1:24), and continued in betrothal (Luke 2:5), pledged to be married.

'Give birth' = *tikto* = *to bring forth*, to bear, to give birth. It is used over 200 times in the OT.

Matthew 1:21 - *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

Matthew 1:23 - *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel*

Matthew 2:2 - *Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?*

Luke 1:57 - *Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.*

Luke 2:6 - *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.*

Luke 2:7 - *And she gave birth to her firstborn son...*

Luke 2:11 – *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

V 7

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

“If we imagine that Jesus was born in a freshly swept, county fair stable, we miss the whole point. It was wretched—scandalous! There was sweat and pain and blood and cries as Mary reached up to the heavens for help. The earth was cold and hard. The smell of birth mixed with the stench of manure and acrid straw made a contemptible bouquet. Trembling carpenter's hands, clumsy with fear, grasped God's Son slippery with blood—the baby's limbs waving helplessly as if falling through space—his face grimacing as he gasped in the cold and his cry pierced the night....No child born into the world that day seemed to have lower prospects. The Son of God was born into the world not as a prince but as a pauper. We must never forget that this is where Christianity began, and where it always begins—with a sense of need, a graced sense of one's insufficiency. Christ, himself setting the example, comes to the needy. He is born only in those who are "poor in spirit.”

Kent Hughes

“firstborn” = prototokos = proto = first & titko = birth – it can mean chronologically but also means preeminent

wrapped him in “swaddling cloths” = spargannoo from spárganon = a swathing or swaddling band. Swaddling clothes were narrow strips of cloth wrapped around an infant. Swaddling is an age-old practice of wrapping infants in blankets or similar cloths so that movement of the limbs is tightly restricted.

The Jews also wrapped their dead in strips of cloth, as they did their infants. His birth was a reminder of the death that would inevitably follow one day.

This, and the gift of myrrh, point to Jesus's death

Mathew 2:11b - Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

It is assumed the gold points to his kingship, the frankincense to his priesthood and the myrrh to his death. The family may have also used these gifts to pay for their sojourn in Egypt.

The gospel of Matthew tells us that after Herod died an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead’ (Matt 2:19-23) Herod died in 4 B.C. Depending on when Jesus was born, the journey to Egypt lasted no more than two years, and perhaps as little as a few weeks or months.

Lk 23:53 - "And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.”

What was the manger? *Manger = phatne = a crib, a feeding trough* – an appropriate place for the bread of life (John 6:35; 48) to be born.

Such mangers were often made of stones laid like blocks, then plastered over with a substance to make them waterproof. These feeding troughs could also be carved from a single block of stone or simply made of dried mud. The animals ate from them. Hezekiah had many such stalls. Actually, several references may be found (2 Chronicles 32:28; Job 6:5; 39:9; Isaiah 1:3; Joel 1:17; Habakkuk 3:17).

Isaiah 1:3a - *The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib,*

Habakkuk 3:17 – Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,

Archaeologists have discovered stone mangers in the horse stables of Ahab at Megiddo. Our members have seen them when visiting Megiddo in the Valley of Armageddon.



Many Palestinian homes consisted of one large room that contained an elevated section and a lower section. The elevated section was the family's living quarters, while the lower section housed the family's animals. Usually a manger, in the form of a masonry box or a stone niche, was located in the lower section. Mangers were also put in cave stables or other stalls.

"No" room = *ouk* = absolutely none.

Because so many had returned to Bethlehem for the census, the small city was overflowing with people. There was no available room for Mary and Joseph, which forced them to take refuge in the only place available—a shelter for animals. (Although the Bible never mentions animals being present at the birth of Christ, Luke does say that the baby Jesus was laid in a manger—and the presence of a manger strongly implies the presence of animals.)

Inn = kataluma = used elsewhere only in Luke 22:11 and Mark 14:14 where it means guest room or dining room, referring to a room in someone's house made available to Jesus and His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal.

Guest chambers in Hebrew homes could be reached from the outside without passing through the house. Jesus applied this in Revelation 3:20 – *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”*

- a) Is this eschatological? Jesus is calling the church (Laodicea) to repentance (3:19). (Pastor's choice)
- b) Is this the Master returning to his watchful servants (Luke 12:35-40)?
- c) Is this Solomon's lover at the door (SoS 5:4)?
- d) Is it the door to the human heart (John 14 & 15)
- e) Is it the house of a sinner (Mark 2:16; Mt 11:18-19)?
- f) Is it the groom knocking on the bride's chamber?

The point for us is that Jesus is using imagery that is understood by his listeners.

Interesting note: There is a theory that the shelter in which Jesus was born was a place in the northern part of Bethlehem called *Migdol Eder*. This was a watchtower with a place underneath that shepherds used during the lambing season to shelter the newborn lambs that would later be used as sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. Jacob fed his sheep there (Genesis 35:21), and there the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, saw and heard the Angels singing, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased”* (Luke 2:14).

The prophet Micah, who foretold Bethlehem as the place of the Messiah's birth, also mentions Migdol Eder. Albert Barnes says it is one mile from Bethlehem.

Micah 4:8 – *And you, O tower of the flock (migdol eder) hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.*

This theory is used to explain why, when the heralding angels gave the sign that the baby would be “wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12), the shepherds seemed to know exactly where to look.

“That is the way the Saviour came into the world. He did not lay aside His deity; He laid aside His glory. There should have been more than just a few shepherds and angels to welcome Him—all of creation should have been there. Instead of collecting taxes, that fellow Caesar should

have been in Bethlehem to worship Him. Jesus Christ could have forced him to do that very thing, but He did not. He came a little baby thing.”

J. Vernon McGee

And it would be apropos for the Messiah to be born in the same place where the sacrificial lambs were born.

*They all were looking for a King
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.*

- George MacDonald