

## The Biblical Birth of Jesus

**Luke 2:1** In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup> Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup> He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup> And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Luke 2:8** In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup> to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,<sup>a</sup> the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,<sup>a</sup> praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”<sup>a</sup>

**Luke 2:15** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this

thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup> So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Most of us grew up hearing the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus and every year we see the famous nativity scene of a manger and it reminds us of the story that has been so deeply ingrained in minds. We see the story of Jesus’ birth in the movies, and it has become part of what I refer to as cultural Christianity.

### Cultural Christianity?

- Cultural Christianity is how people within a community live into their Christianity and communicate the stories of Scripture — much like the Christmas story
- Cultural Christianity isn’t always Biblical Christianity
  - This sermon is going to unpack the Scriptural story of Jesus’ birth and contrast it against cultural Christianity.

The story of Jesus Birth begins with the author telling us that Caesar Augustus of the Roman Empire sent out a decree that all the world should be registered.

- This registration was for the purpose of preparing the people for taxation.

- This meant that people had to go back to the towns they were originally from in order to be registered, which brings us to Joseph.

Verse 2:4: Joseph (who was presently living in Nazareth in Galilee went to the town of Bethlehem to be registered because he was descended from the house and family of David.

- Joseph was from the tribe of Judah, which is the tribe that the Messiah was prophesized to come from. (Micah 5:2)
- But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
    who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
    one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
    from ancient days.
  - All the Jews knew this — and because the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah — they were one of the most highly respected tribes during the time of Joseph.
    - Bethlehem, being a town of about only 300 people during that time — people would have known which families living in Bethlehem were from the respected tribe of Judah
  - By going to Bethlehem signals that Joseph either owned some land there because of the Israelite land allotments that got passed down through Moses (see Numbers – Leviticus) or he had family there — or both could be true.
  - Most likely — Joseph was not a stranger

Let's entertain the idea that Joseph and Mary didn't know anyone in Bethlehem — let's say they were strangers:

- The Jewish people were very well known for their hospitality and if they honored anything at all — it was their hospitality to the stranger, **which was part of their law**
  - Seeing a husband and a pregnant mother and turning them away is not even a high probability.

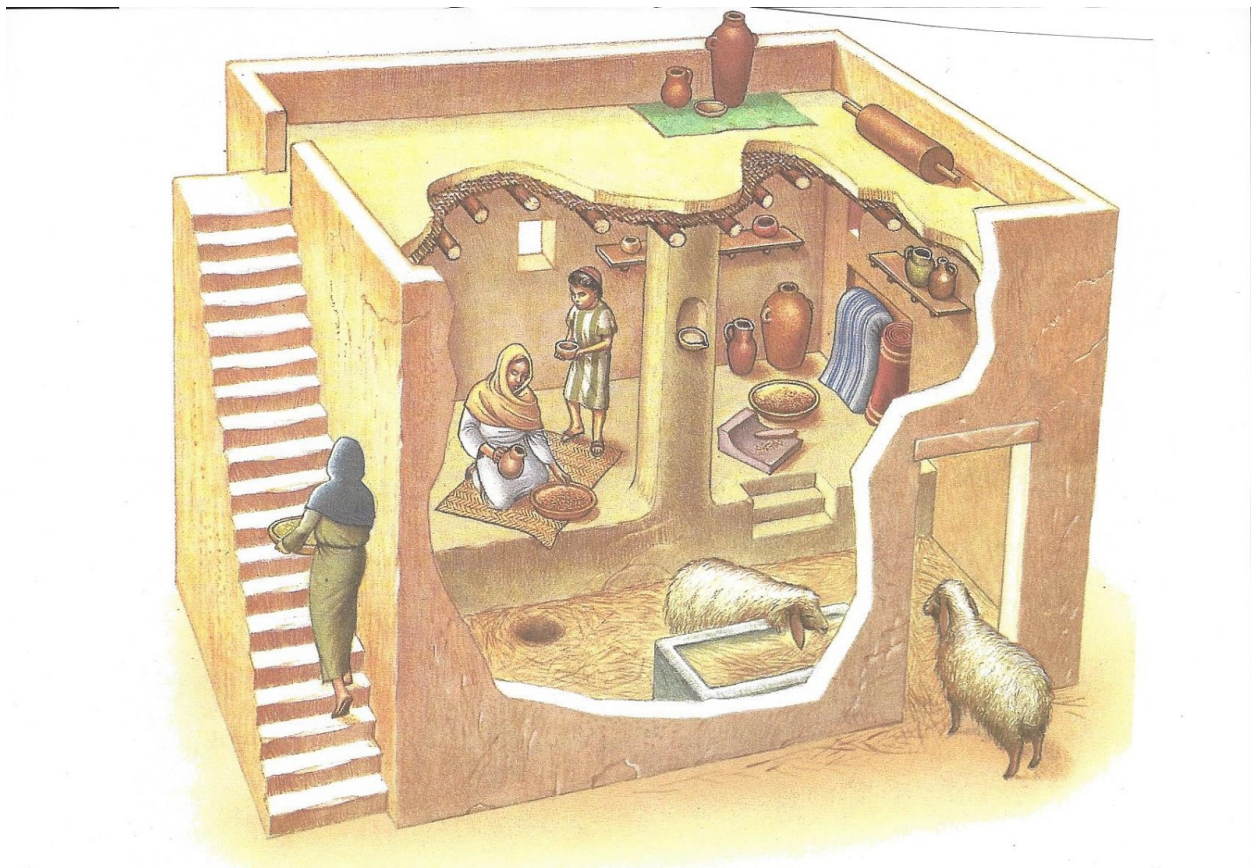
Recap:

- Joseph and Mary head down to Joseph's hometown in Bethlehem to be registered — and most likely he had family there who had a home that they stayed in. . . . And here is the first clue to that:
  - In verse 6, the Scripture states, "**While** they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child."
    - Not – as soon as they got there she went into labor
      - But "while they were there"
        - **In other words, they were already staying there in a place.**
- So while they were there, she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger — and here is that famous verse "because there was no place for them in the inn."

The original Greek word that is translated here as inn – is καταλύματι, and it is more accurately translated as guest room. This word shows up only three times in the Gospels and each time it is translated as guest room.

- In fact, there is a specific word for an inn and that is πανδοχεῖον, and it appears in the story of the good Samaritan when he brought the man that was beaten on the side of the road to the πανδοχεῖον – the inn.
- What we have here is a translation issue that cultural Christianity has had a field day with — suddenly there is an innkeeper involved.

### Illustration of a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestinian home:



### 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestinian home

- Notice that there are animals in the house and there is a manger
  - Animals were protected – they provided warmth
  - They were not kept outside where they could be attacked or stolen

Jesus was most likely born in a house surrounded by many people – there was probably Jewish midwives there - - - and he was placed in the manger – which is a feeding trough

Recap: While Joseph & Mary were staying in Joseph's family home – it came time for Mary to deliver and being that the house was full due to the census – They had Mary deliver in the lower room of the house where the animals where – most likely because it was more private and warmer. After Jesus was born – He was placed in the manger, which was also inside the house.

Luke's story then moves on to the shepherds, which also tells us a few things.

v. 12 “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

- What this verse is implying is that this child will not be found in a royal household swaddled in a royal blanket in a fancy crib (so to speak)
  - Rather he will be found in a peasant's home
    - He is not out of reach — this child is accessible to the people.

After hearing this the multitude of angels rejoiced and the scene ends. And then the shepherds go and find the child lying in the manger.

- Cultural Christianity will have you only picturing Joseph, Mary & the baby Jesus — but there were actually many people present – a room full of people
- “When the shepherds saw Jesus in the manger, they made known what had been told them about this child; **and all who heard it** were amazed at what the shepherds told them.”
  - The key phrase is “all who heard it were amazed” signifying that this was a room full of people and not just Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.