

- b) Bodie Hodge suggests, “Contrary to the idea of Jesus being born in a stable, He was likely born in the lower room of a house where animals often stay and subsequently laid in a manger.”

b. The birth

- 1) While they were there finding shelter with the animals, Mary’s days were accomplished. Evidently it was not the night in which they arrived, but within days of that time.
- 2) Mary brought forth her firstborn son. This again affirms her virginity.
- 3) She wrapped him in swaddling clothes. Such clothes were strips of cloth wrapped around the newborn baby. There was nothing royal about this humble birth to a poor couple taking shelter among animals.
- 4) Jesus’ first bed was a manger. A manger was not necessarily a little box. It may have been a feeding trench cut out of the rock or built of stone. Lined with hay, it made a comfortable bed for the Son of God.
- 5) This is all that we know for sure about those early days of Christ’s life on earth. Edersheim wisely comments, “Thus early in this history does the absence of details, which painfully increases as we proceed, remind us, that the Gospels were not intended to furnish a biography of Jesus, nor even the materials for it; but had only this twofold object: that those who read them ‘might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,’ and that believing they ‘might have life through His Name.’”

Conclusion: Since Jesus, the King of Glory, was willing to be born to a poor mother in a shelter with the animals and to be wrapped in rags, we ought to ask the Lord to make us content with the basic things of life instead of wanting bigger, better and more of the pleasures of this life. The world has made Christmas into a time of greed. The apostle Paul wrote, (1 Timothy 6:6) "*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*" May we never forget that Jesus is the reason for the season!

Song: Jesus, Wonderful Lord! **102**

Christmas Story (pt. 5) Jesus’ Birth

11 December 2016 PM – Luke 2:1-7 – Christmas16 – Scott Childs

Introduction: The hymn writer Emily Ellicott penned the following words to the hymn “thou Didst Leave Thy Throne” *Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown, When Thou camest to earth for me; But in Bethlehem’s home was there found no room For Thy holy nativity.* This evening’s portion of the Christmas Story is about the birth of Christ.

Transition: We are going to examine the taxation, the trip to Bethlehem, and the birth of Jesus.

1. The Taxation (v.1-3)

a. The event

- 1) The taxation was not a tax collection
- 2) It was a registration for taxation.

b. The time

- 1) The decree was made by Caesar Augustus, the emperor of Rome.
- 2) Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Thayer tells us that Cyrenius is “the Greek form of the Roman name Quirinus. ... He was consul [A diplomat appointed by a government to protect its commercial interests and help its citizens in a foreign country] B.C. 12., and was made governor of Syria after the banishment of Archelaus in A.D. 6. He was probably twice governor of Syria; his first governorship extended from B.C. 4 ... to B.C. 1. It was during this time that he was sent to make enrolment which caused Joseph and Mary to visit Bethlehem.” Thayer’s Lexicon
- 3) Pentecost researched much evidence on the time of this enrolment with this conclusion. “The exact year of this census ... is difficult to pinpoint but it was probably taken sometime between 6 and 4 B.C., preferably the later part of this span of time.” Pentecost, *The Words & Works of Jesus Christ*, p. 57
- 4) The time of year was probably during the winter. Pentecost points out, “the sheep were taken into enclosures from November until March and were not in the fields at night. ... The Lukan narrative states that the

shepherds were around Bethlehem (rather than in the wilderness), thus indicating that the nativity was in the winter months.” ^{ibid.}

c. The requirement

- 1) Every male was required to register (v.3). This included Joseph the husband of Mary.
- 2) “According to the Roman law, all country-people were to be registered in their ‘own city’ - meaning thereby the town to which the village or place, where they were born, was attached.” ^{Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, book 2, chapter 6}

2. The Trip to Bethlehem (v.4-5)

a. Joseph

- 1) He went up from Nazareth in Galilee. We know nothing about how he came to live in Nazareth. Nazareth was located about 120 km north of Jerusalem. “It was situated on the side of a hill overlooking a rich and beautiful valley, surrounded by hills, with a narrow outlet towards the south.” ^{A Dictionary of the Holy Bible, by ATS}
- 2) He travelled to Bethlehem in Judea. He did so because he was of the house and lineage of David.
 - a) Bethlehem, located about 10 km south-west of Jerusalem.
 - b) It is the very ancient city of Ephrath. Jacob’s wife Rachel died in that place (Gen 35:16). Boaz and Ruth lived there as did their son Obed, their grandson Jesse and their great-grandson David.
 - c) Bethlehem was situated in the mountains about 824 m above sea level. The fields around Bethlehem were fertile and thus the city was called “the house of bread.”
- 3) Edersheim states, “The way had been long and weary – at the very least, three days’ journey, whatever route had been taken from Galilee. Most probably it would be that so commonly followed, from a desire to avoid Samaria, along the eastern banks of the Jordan, and by the fords of Jericho. Although passing through one of the warmest

parts of the country, the season of the year must, even in most favorable circumstances, have greatly increased the difficulties of such a journey.” ^{ibid.}

b. Mary

- 1) Was Mary required to register for the taxation? We do not know. Perhaps adult women were required. Perhaps Joseph took her to remove her from the local gossip and stress in Nazareth. It could have been with the closeness of her delivery, she wanted to be near Joseph. It is even possible that they knew that the Christ child should be born in Bethlehem.
- 2) How they travelled is a mystery. The common mode was to walk. Being poor as they were, it is unlikely that they had a donkey for Mary to ride. However, they travelled, the Lord sustained them.
- 3) Peter Pett notes that, “Luke probably still uses the term ‘betrothed’ in order to indicate that they had not yet consummated their marriage. ... It is, however, unlikely that she would have accompanied Joseph if the wedding had not taken place.”
- 4) During their travel to Bethlehem, Mary was great with child. She was in her last weeks before the baby should be born.

3. Jesus’ Birth (v.6-7)

a. The location

- 1) All that we know for positive is that they were not welcomed into a home with friends or family. They were not even able to secure a room in an inn. When Jesus was born, they laid him in a manger. A manger was a feeding-trough for animals. In Luke 13:15 it is translated “the stall.”
- 2) From this we may conclude that their place of shelter was with the animals.
 - a) This place may have been a cave. Ironside states, “It would not be a wooden barn but a cave cut in the limestone.” Evidently such caves were common in that region.