

Christmas 2010-001 and 002
The Birth of Christ
God With Us:
The “Uniquely Conceived One”

It is mysterious

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16).

John 1:14 (NASB95)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and
we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the
Father, full of grace and truth.

No One Born Like Him

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave

His

only (uniquely)

begotten (conceived)

Son,

that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have
eternal life .

It is mysterious

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Psalms 2:7-8 "I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, 'You are My Son; Today I have begotten thee. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.' "

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

Uri Marcus has some very profound insights into the birth of Jesus. Consider:

"The single most important event in history was the birth of Jesus (Y'shua) the Messiah. All the world, since Adam and Eve had been waiting for "the seed of the woman, who would bruise the head of Satan" (Genesis 3:15). The entire Bible was written about him and for him. From Genesis to Revelation the nature and purpose of the Messiah is depicted in explicit references and hidden "types".

But why is He called the seed of a woman?
A child is ordinarily regarded as the seed of his father and forefathers.
The striking and unnatural character of the expression "her seed" suggests that it is a uniquely fitting name for the victor over Satan.
Unlike other men, He would be the seed of a woman only.
He would not be a man's seed.
A virgin would conceive Him without losing her virginity.

Seed of the Woman

Over seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah enlarged upon the Protevangelium of Gen 3:15.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Seed of the Woman

The name Immanuel means, "God with us."

Isaiah is appending to Genesis 3:15 the information that the virgin-born conqueror of Satan would be God Himself in the flesh.

Seed of the Woman

Controversy has long raged over the word rendered "virgin" in the KJV of Isaiah 7:14.

Translators of the RSV substituted "young woman."

The contention of many critics who disbelieve prophecy is that Isaiah in this verse is referring exclusively to his own wife (2).

Seed of the Woman

She has already given birth to Shear-jashub, which means, "A remnant shall return" (Isa. 7:3).

Later, she will give birth to Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means, "Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey" (Isa. 8:3).

Therefore, say these critics, Isaiah's only announcement here, in Isaiah 7:14, is that his wife will give (or has given) birth to another son with a prophetically meaningful name.

Seed of the Woman

The word translated "virgin" in the KJV is *almah*. This term in either its feminine form (*almah*) or masculine form (*elem*) occurs nine times in the Old Testament (Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; 1 Sam. 17:56; 20:22; Psa. 68:25; Prov. 30:19; S. of Sol. 1:3; 6:8; Isa. 7:14).

So far as we can judge from the contexts, the term never refers to a married person or even to an adult.

Seed of the Woman

He says that the word *almah* pertains to the sixth stage, which is between dependent childhood and independent youth (4).

By its connotation of firmness and strength, the word suggests the rapid bodily growth of early adolescence (5). Thus, an *almah* was a girl about twelve to fourteen years old.

Seed of the Woman

The closest English equivalents to *almah* are "maiden" and "damsel" (6). "Young woman," although passable as a translation, stretches the concept too far into adulthood.

The rabbis taught that a father should betroth his daughter to his slave rather than keep her unbetrothed beyond puberty (7).

Seed of the Woman

A girl was normally married before she passed much beyond fourteen (8).

Thus, since *almah* specifically denotes a girl at the stage of growth just before marriage, the term apparently came to signify "unmarried girl of marriageable age" (9).

Seed of the Woman

And since nearly all unmarried girls in ancient Hebrew culture were chaste, the term seems to have acquired the further meaning "virgin" (10). In some of the texts exhibiting *almah*, "virgin" is clearly the most appropriate translation.

Seed of the Woman

Genesis 24:43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin [*almah*] cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink. 44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.

Seed of the Woman

The speaker is Abraham's servant, who has been sent to a far country to find a wife for Abraham's son Isaac.

The servant would certainly have found it natural to call Isaac's prospective wife a virgin.

Another instructive text is the following:

There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins [plural of almah] without number. - Song of Solomon 6:8

Seed of the Woman

The list comprehends all the women within the king's household.

Although many queens and concubines were young women, the term *almah* is reserved for girls unmarried to the king—in other words, for virgins (11).

Also, when the Gospel of Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14, it substitutes *parthenos* for *almah* (Matt. 1:23) (13).

Seed of the Woman

Many compelling arguments can be brought against any attempt to remove the idea of a virgin mother from Isaiah 7:14.

1. There is no record that Isaiah's wife actually bore a son named Immanuel (15). Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz are the children intended in Isaiah 8:18.

Seed of the Woman

The allegation that the *almah* of Isaiah 7:14 is merely Isaiah's wife creates the anomaly of a prophecy without a recorded fulfillment.

2. The promise of Immanuel falls at the end of a conversation between Isaiah and King Ahaz. The Lord offered to show King Ahaz any sign that he chose—even any wonder in the heights above or the depths below (v. 11).

Seed of the Woman

Neither was a restriction on the power that God was willing to display.

Yet the king declined to ask for anything, hiding his unbelief under the pious excuse that he did not wish to tempt the Lord (v. 12).

The Lord therefore responded that He would give a sign of His own choosing.

This sign, announced in verse 14, is presumably no less miraculous than the sign already promised (16).

Seed of the Woman

We dare not trivialize Isaiah's prophecy by supposing that after the Lord had offered any extraordinary sign that Ahaz could imagine, without limit in the heights above or depths below, the best the Lord could do was to grant another baby to the Isaiahs.

Seed of the Woman

3. The sign announced in verse 14 must be understood as the Lord's remedy for His complaint in verse 13.

He was growing weary of the present ruler of Israel (v. 13).

So, He would give the throne of Israel to another king, to the child called Immanuel (v. 14), who would supplant all evil rulers and inaugurate a new kingdom devoted to wisdom and righteousness.

Seed of the Woman

4. After declaring that the Lord Himself would give a sign, the prophet said, "Behold" (v. 14).

In other words: "Look. Pay close attention.

I am going to show you something strange and marvelous."

The sign would be a great wonder, not just another son of Isaiah (17).

Seed of the Woman

5. Why would Isaiah refer to his wife vaguely as "the young woman" instead of naming her or, as he does later, calling her "the prophetess" (Isa. 8:3) (18)?

The critic has Isaiah saying, "Behold, a certain young woman who will remain nameless but who is actually my wife is going to have another child." This, of course, is ludicrous.

Seed of the Woman

6. In saying, "A virgin shall conceive," the KJV misses the mark. "Virgin" is preceded by a definite article.

Isaiah's actual words were, "The virgin shall conceive" (19).

Evidently, he was thinking of a virgin of such singular renown and importance that she was rightly called "the virgin."

No doubt he was thinking of the virgin mentioned first in Genesis 3:15, the virgin who would bear the conqueror of Satan (20).

Seed of the Woman

7. The child is called Immanuel, meaning, "God with us."

The name shows that Isaiah was not thinking of an ordinary child, but of the child described just two chapters later, in Isaiah 9 (21).

Seed of the Woman

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince
of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

The holder of these august titles is not some
obscure offspring of Isaiah, but the divine son who
would become the everlasting King of all.

False Doctrine of Mary's Virginity

The Immaculate Conception is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the Immaculate Conception refers to the sinless state of Mary.

Pope Pius IX proclaimed this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on December 8, 1854.

Many people, Catholics included, wrongly believe that this dogma refers to the conception of Jesus Christ.

But, in fact, the Immaculate Conception doctrine states that Mary, "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."

This meant that Mary herself was preserved from original sin, that she was born without a sin nature, and that she lived a sinless life.

There is no biblical support or scriptural basis for the Immaculate Conception of Mary doctrine. Mary, although favored of God, was an ordinary human being. According to Scripture, only Jesus Christ was immaculately conceived, born of a virgin, and born without sin.

He was the only human being to live a sinless life.

Arguments: For this doctrine to hold up, wouldn't Mary's mother have to be free from original sin also, else Mary would have inherited a sinful nature through her?

Based on Scripture, the miracle of Jesus Christ's conception was that **he alone** was conceived as the only perfect and sinless one, because of his complete union with the divine nature of God.

The Assumption of Mary

The Assumption of Mary is a Roman Catholic doctrine, and to a lesser degree it is also taught by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Pope Pius XII proclaimed this doctrine on November 1, 1950 in his *Munificentissimus Deus*.

This dogma states that the "Immaculate Virgin," the mother of Jesus, "after the completion of her earthly life was assumed body and soul into the glory of Heaven."

This means that after her death, Mary was resurrected and taken up into heaven, body and soul.

The doctrine further states that Mary was glorified in heaven and is "exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things."

We do know, however that she was a virgin from Luke 1:34-35

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

"And Jesus Himself, when He began His work, was about thirty years of age, - being as was supposed - the Son of Joseph, the Son of Heli, the Son of Matthat."

The Necessity of the Virgin Birth and the False Doctrine of Mary

Romans 5:12 *“because of this, even as through one man the sin did enter into the world, and through the sin the death; and thus to all men the death did pass through, for that all did sin;*

- *(17 for if by the offence of the one the death did reign through the one...)*
- *(18 So, then, as through one offence to all men it is to condemnation...)*
- *(19 for as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners...)*
- 1 Corinthians 15:22 (YLT)
22 for even as in Adam all die

1 Timothy 2:13-14 (YLT) 13 for Adam was first formed, then Eve, 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, having been deceived, into transgression came,

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

Most Gentile Christians wouldn't bother to speculate about the time when Jesus was born. We celebrate it on December 25th even though we suspect that there is no Biblical basis for choosing that date.

However, there are many Jewish Believers who feel with a reasonable degree of certainty, the time of year when Jesus was really born, taking into account certain Jewish customs and traditions was probably in September or October.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

There is quite a wide consensus of opinion that Jesus was born at some time during the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), or Succoth (Tabernacles). These festivals normally occur in the Autumn, about September or October, but it varies from year to year because the Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon and doesn't track with the Gregorian calendar.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

The apostle John tells us that the Word (of God) became flesh and tabernacled (dwelt in a sukkah) among us (John 1:14).

Sukkot is figurative of Messiah's coming to dwell among His people.

While we do not know for certain that He was born on Sukkot, it would fit with God's history of fulfilling the Feasts by Christ.

Sukkot = Tabernacles = Booths

You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful."

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

Sukkot = Tabernacles = Booths

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, *"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.*

Sukkot = Tabernacles = Booths

Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

Sukkot = Tabernacles = Booths

You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God." So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD. Leviticus 23:33-44 NASB

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

The calculation of the time of Jesus' birth begins with Zechariah (Z'chariyahu), the father of John (Yochanan) the Baptist. According to Luke 1:5 he was a priest of the order of Aviyah. He was performing his duties, burning incense in the Temple, when an angel appeared and said his wife Elizabeth (Eli-Sheva) would conceive and bear a son, and he would be called John.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

The order in which the priestly families performed their duties is given in 1 Chronicles 24:7-18.

According to the Mishnah, the cycle begins on the first Sabbath of Nisan, and each family of priests would minister in turn for one week.

Since there are 24 families, each family would minister about twice a year.

The cycle would be delayed slightly because all priests, regardless of their families, were required to be at the Temple for the three festivals of Passover (Pesach), Pentecost (Shavu'ot) and Tabernacles (Succoth).

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

The family of Aviyah was eighth in line, so Zechariah would have had his first period of duty during the Jewish month of Sivan (about June) and his second period during the month of Kislev about six months later. There is no way of knowing for sure which period of duty is referred to in Luke's Gospel, but if we suppose it is the first period we get some very interesting results.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

Zechariah finished his first period of duty about the middle of Sivan. Because of his unbelief, God struck him dumb, but his reproductive system was still working. He went home to his wife and she became pregnant. Count off 40 weeks, the usual period of gestation, and we get to the month of Nisan the following year. Beginning on the 14th of Nisan, and lasting for eight days, we have the festivals of Passover, unleavened bread (Matzoth) and First Fruits (Bikurim), which all occur in the spring.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

This raises the distinct possibility that John the Baptist was born at Passover, which coincides with the Jewish expectation that Elijah (Eliyahu) would come at Passover.

Remember our custom to put an extra cup of wine on the table at Passover, in the hope that Elijah will come and drink it?

Remember that Jesus responded to the disciples question about Elijah by saying that he had already come (speaking about John)?

If John the Baptist was born at Passover, Jesus must have been born during the autumn feasts, and most probably at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

“When the decree went out for everyone to go to their home town to be registered, Joseph (Yosef) and Mary (Miriam) set off for Bethlehem (Beit Lechem).”

The month of Tishri (in the fall) also fits with the season of shepherds being out with their flocks by night, as they were when Jesus was born; during winter the lambs are kept indoors.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

During the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), Jewish families construct a flimsy shelter called a "Succah", made of loosely assembled walls and a leafy overhead covering. In the Succah, they eat or sleep.

This is a reminder to them that they were completely dependent on God as they wandered for forty years in the desert after departing from Egypt and were led by "a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night."

The central theme of Tabernacles is God's ultimate purpose - God dwelling with and in man.

Tabernacles looked forward to when God would dwell with man as Immanuel: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel (God with us)" (Isaiah 7:14).

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

This would make sense since we know that Jesus would fulfill every aspect of the Law (Torah) from his birth until his death.

The link here is directly to commandment in Leviticus 23: 42, "Live in Succoth for seven days: All native born Israelites are to live in Succoth so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in Succoth when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

John, in his Gospel narrative of Jesus' birth, confirms this truth when he indicates that God had come to earth to dwell with (and serve) humanity. We read in John 1:14 about how "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (Tabernacled) among us," which is a clear and obvious reference to the Feast of Tabernacles.

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Tabernacles

The Talmud (Sukkah 55b) teaches that these were brought "for the (merit of the) 70 nations of the world." Rashi comments: "To bring forgiveness for them, so that rain shall fall all over the earth." When the Temple stood, willow branches were brought and leaned against the Mizbayach (altar) during Sukkot. The Shofar was blown and the Kohanim (priests) would walk around the altar and recite the prayer *Hosha Na* - "Please, bring salvation."

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

If the day of Jesus' birth was the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, then the day of his circumcision would be the eighth day after the Feast of Tabernacles which, in accordance with the Law is also day of sacred assembly. (Leviticus 23:39).

On this day, called "Shemini Atzeret," or "the Eighth day of Solemn Assembly" and later called "Simchat Torah" or "Rejoicing in the Torah," the Jews complete their annual cycle of Torah readings (Deuteronomy 32) and start again from Genesis.

The Birth of Jesus on Sukkot

It is considered to be a time of "completion" of the Law and also a new beginning for it, since the Word is never-ending.

Thus just as Christ fulfilled Passover in His death, he fulfilled Tabernacles in His birth.

Jesus' Birth was a fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles:

"The Word (Jesus) became flesh (His conception) and dwelt (literally: TABERNACLED, pitched His tent) among us (His Birth) and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14).

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

By the time of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish people had added significantly to the celebrations commanded by God.

One such addition centered on the illumination of the Temple during the week of Sukkot.

According to the Talmud, which gives detailed descriptions of the Temple in the 1st-century period, during Sukkot four enormous lamp stands, each of them 75-80 feet high, were erected in one of the Temple courtyards.

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

Each lampstand had four large bowls at the top, which each held 10 gallons of pure oil.

Each night of the feast, young men with torches would climb the candelabrum and ignite the oil.

The light of the burning oil, the Talmud records, was so bright that that every courtyard in Jerusalem was illuminated by them.

The entire city would obey God's command to rejoice.

Pious men, members of the Sanhedrin, and leaders of religious schools would dance in the courtyard, holding aloft torches and singing praises to God.

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

The worn-out liturgical garments of Priests were used for wicks. The light from these lampstands was so bright that it was stated, "There was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light at the water-well ceremony" (Talmud: Sukkah 5:3).

Yeshua spoke publicly on Sukkot, saying, "*I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" (John 8:12)

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

A second addition was the water-drawing ceremony.

As an agrarian society in an arid land, Israel was mostly dependent on rain for their water supply, and this ceremony called upon the Lord to provide heavenly water.

On the seventh day of Sukkot – known as Hoshana Rabba, the Great Day – a priest carried a golden pitcher to the pool of Siloam at the foot of the Temple Mount.

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

He was accompanied by flute players and other musicians.

The golden pitcher was filled with water from the pool and carried back to the Temple, where once more the shofar was blown, to announce the priest's arrival.

As the musicians played and a Levitical choir sang, the water was poured into a silver basin beside the altar and the priest prayed that the Lord would send rain.

During this ceremony the Jewish people looked to a day foretold by the prophet Joel, when God would pour His Spirit out upon them.

Rain was not only a necessity for the crops in the land, but was symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

This Water ceremony was only performed at Sukkot.

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

The Talmud states, "Why is the name of it called the Drawing Out of Water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw out of the wells of salvation' " (Isaiah 12:3).

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Yeshua was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39).

Jesus' Ministry and Sukkot

Jesus celebrated His birthday on a mountain with three of His disciples (Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:1-10). On the Festival of Sukkot, Moses and Elijah, from centuries past, representatives of the Torah and the Prophets, appeared and talked with Jesus.

One disciple, Kepha (Peter), suggested building three sukka's for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, because it was required for the festival, but he did not understand (Mark 9:6) that they were there to testify to Jesus' fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, that He was "God with us".

Sukkot in the Future

There are 3 Festivals in the Fall: Rosh Hashanah is God's wake-up call, telling us to wake up and get ready. On Yom Kippur, we are getting ourselves ready, getting clean of sin, so that we can go into God's presence. As we gather together on Sukkot, we should be reminded to look forward to the final Ingathering of God's People. The Feast of Tabernacles is a prophetic festival, pointing us to the day when God's kingdom will be established on earth.

The prophet Zechariah foretold this:

“it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.” Zechariah 14:16 NASB

Sukkot in the Future

The writers of the New Testament affirmed this prophetic truth, believing that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, that He was God coming to tabernacle among us. In his Revelation, John wrote: *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost."*

Revelation 21:3-6

Bethlehem

Micah 5:1 "But thou Bethlehem Ephratha, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall One come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from old, from Ancient of Days."

Luke 2:1 Around this time, Emperor Augustus issued an order for a census to be taken throughout the Empire. 2 This registration, the first of its kind, took place when Quirinius was governing in Syria. 3 Everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 So Yosef, because he was a descendant of David, went up from the town of Natzeret in the Galil to the town of David, called Beit-Lechem, in Y'hudah, 5 to be registered, with Miryam, to whom he was engaged, and who was pregnant.

Each to his own town!

No Room in the What?

Mary and Joseph weren't trying to check into a hotel—they were staying with relatives.

Ben Witherington III

I am here to tamper with a masterpiece, or better said, to share with you a rather different reading of Luke 2:1-7, one solidly grounded in the facts, but nowhere represented in Christmas carols and pageants.

I must tell you that I have heard endless sermons on how there was "no room in the inn" and how it was typical of a cold, fallen world to cast the holy family and Jesus out into the cold, and so on, often preached with great fervor but producing no ferment at all.

We've heard it countless times before.

Each to his own town!

We've all been inoculated with a slight case of Christmas, preventing us from getting the real thing, or in this case, from reading these texts in a more historical way. The problem with the Christmas-pageant version is, this is not at all likely to be what Luke intends to tell us in this much beloved and belabored Christmas tale.

When it came time for Mary to deliver the baby, the Greek of Luke's text says, "she wrapped him in cloth and laid him in a corn crib, as there was no room in the guest room."

Each to his own town!

Yes, you heard me right. Luke does not say there was no room in the inn. Luke has a different Greek word for inn (*pandeion*), which he trots out in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The word he uses here (*kataluma*) is the very word he uses to describe the room in which Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples — the guest room of a house." - [end]

The Time of Christ's Coming

It is quite likely that Joseph had relatives in Bethlehem, since his family was from there.

It is highly unlikely he would stay at a "Motel" or Inn, if he had relatives to stay with, so we need to look at the story closely, to see if it conforms to the typical Church nativity scene of this Season.

In the typical Christmas pageant, one of the children will be cast as the heartless innkeeper who refuses lodging to Joseph and pregnant Mary.

Most know that there is no innkeeper mentioned in the Bible, but fewer are aware that there is not even an inn described.

The view that Joseph and Mary simply arrived late to Bethlehem and accommodations at the local hotel were full is incorrect.

The "Inn"

The word translated as "inn" is the word *kataluma*, which is used elsewhere by Luke and translated as "guest chamber" or "upper room" (Luke 22:11; cf. Mark 14:14).

When Luke wants to speak of a paid establishment (i.e., an inn), he uses a different Greek word, *pandocheion*, as in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34).

Now, it is possible that, because of the large influx of travelers, that some entrepreneurs opened up their homes for rent, but we have no evidence that this happened here.



The "Inn"

Joseph, remember, was from Bethlehem.

It's possible he had family there - being a thoughtful man, it's not likely he would have carried a pregnant Mary all the way to Bethlehem to give birth among strangers.

So, instead of the image of a humble carpenter banging on the door of every hotel, motel and Holiday Inn, we have an "upper room" of a relative's home with no privacy for a baby to be born.

Some, however, argue that she was shunned by the family, because of her pre-marital pregnancy, and was forced to stay with the animals, instead of the family.



The "Inn"

It must be remembered, that if it is true that this was a relative's home, there are very strict Jewish hygiene laws to be observed and delivering a baby on the "upper room" or in the family's quarters, would render it "unclean," and present a big problem; so it is likely that the lower level, the storage area and animal shelter area, was probably the best choice for all.

Leviticus 12:1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period.

The "Inn"

Lev 15:20-23 "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. "Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.

6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth; 7 and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in narrow strips of cloth (the King's wrappings and death wrappings) and laid him down in a feeding trough (manger), because there was no space for them in the inn.

Swaddling Cloths

Wisdom of Solomon 7:4-6

4 I was nursed with care in swaddling cloths.

5 For no king has had a different beginning of existence;

6 there is for all one entrance into life, and one way out.

The Manger

6 While they were there, the time came for her to give birth; 7 and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in narrow strips of cloth (the King's wrappings and death wrappings) and laid him down in a feeding trough (manger), because there was no space for them in the inn.

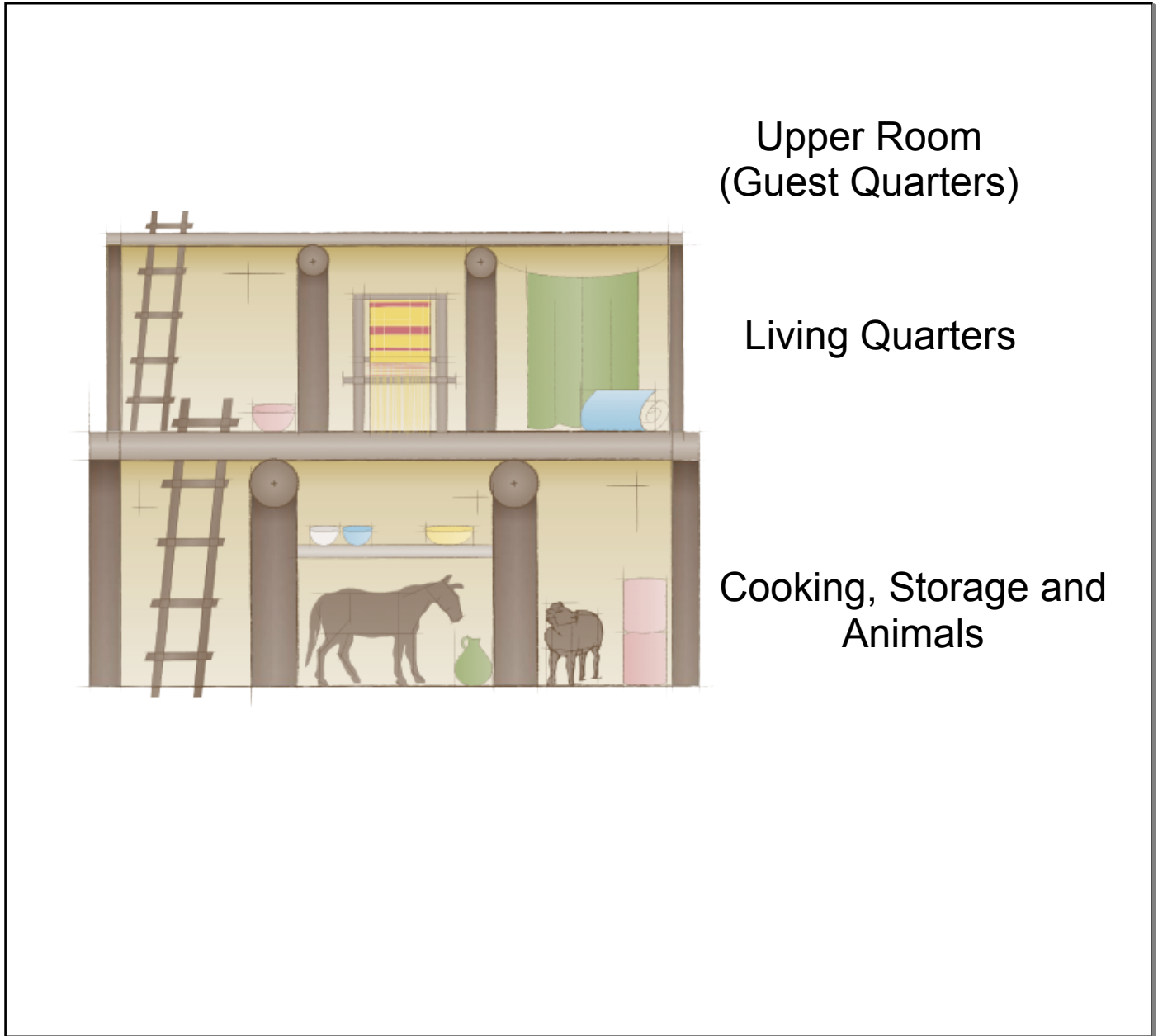
In the Middle East, even today, many houses are built as three story cubes.

The top floor is the roof ("Upper Room") where clear nights are spent sleeping, eating, talking and hanging out, or for guests.

The middle floor is for the same activities when the weather is problematic.

The stables are on the bottom.

The animals are tucked into little rooms with the mangers carved into the dirt floor and lined with gravel.



The “Manger”

*She wrapped him in narrow strips of cloth (the King's wrappings and death wrappings) and laid him down in a feeding trough (manger - φάτρῃ from *pateomai* (to eat)).*

Manger

A box or trough, usually carved from stone, used for the feeding of animals (cf. Luke 13:15).

Mangers could be found wherever animals were kept, either in a lower portion of a house or in a cave near a house or even beneath a house.

In caves, the manger was frequently carved out of the wall.

According to Luke 2:7, 12, 16, a manger was used as the bed for the infant Jesus after his birth in Bethlehem.

In the early traditions, the place of Jesus' birth was thought to have been a cave, although the Lucan account does not supply such information.

Later (early fourth century a.d.), the Emperor Constantine erected a basilica over a cave in Bethlehem believed to be Jesus' birthplace, and this basilica evolved into the present Church of the Nativity.

The "Manger"

She wrapped him in narrow strips of cloth and laid him down in a feeding trough (manger - φάτνη from pateomai (to eat)).





A manger is a feeding trough used for cattle, sheep, donkeys, or horses. Archaeologists have discovered stone mangers in the horse stables of Ahab at Megiddo.

They were cut out of limestone and were approximately three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and two feet deep.

Other ancient mangers were made of masonry.

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.

Jeremiah 14:7

“Though our iniquities testify against us,
act, O Lord, for your name’s sake;
for our backslidings are many;
we have sinned against you.

8 O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of
trouble, why should you be like a stranger in
the land, like a traveler who turns aside to
tarry for a night?

9 Why should you be like a man confused,
like a mighty warrior who cannot save?

Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us,
and we are called by your name; do not leave
us.”

Isaiah 1:2

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken:

“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib (phatne), but
Israel does not know, my people do not
understand.”

4 Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly!

They have forsaken the Lord,
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they are utterly estranged.

The Manger
The Feeding Trough of the
Whole World
“And as they were eating,
Jesus took bread, and
blessed it, and brake it, and
gave it to the disciples, and
said, Take, eat: this is My
body.

The Time of Christ's Coming

8 In the countryside nearby were some shepherds spending the night in the fields, guarding their flocks (The sacrificial Lambs for the Temple), 9 when an angel of Adonai appeared to them, and the Sh'khinah of Adonai shone around them. They were terrified; 10 but the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, because I am here announcing to you Good News that will bring great joy to all the people.

The Time of Christ's Coming

11 This very day, in the town of David, there was born for you a Deliverer who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 Here is how you will know: you will find a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a feeding trough." 13 Suddenly, along with the angel was a vast army from heaven praising God: 14 "In the highest heaven, glory to God! And on earth, peace among people of His pleasure!"

The Time of Christ's Coming

15 No sooner had the angels left them and gone back into heaven than the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go over to Beit-Lechem and see this thing that has happened, that Adonai has told us about." 16 Hurrying off, they came and found Miryam and Yosef, and the baby lying in the feeding trough. 17 Upon seeing this, they made known what they had been told about this child; 18 and all who heard were amazed by what the shepherds said to them.

The Time of Christ's Coming

19 Miryam treasured all these things and kept mulling them over in her heart. 20 Meanwhile, the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen; it had been just as they had been told.

8 days old

21 On the eighth day, when it was time for his *bʿrit-milah* , he was given the name Yeshua, which is what the angel had called him before his conception.

33 days old...

22 When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim to present him to Adonai 23 (as it is written in the Torah of Adonai , “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Adonai ”) 24 and also to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two Young pigeons, as required by the Torah of Adonai .

33 days old...

Luke 2:25 - 28(Shim'on) There was in Yerushalayim a man named Shim'on. This man was a tzaddik , he was devout, he waited eagerly for God to comfort Israel, and the Ruach HaKodesh was upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Ruach HaKodesh that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah of Adonai . 27 Prompted by the Spirit, he went into the Temple courts; and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua to do for him what the Torah required, 28 Shim'on took him in his arms, made a b'rakhah to God, and said,

33 days old...

Luke 29 - 32 "Now, Adonai , according to your word, your servant is at peace as you let him go; 30 for I have seen with my own eyes your yeshuah , 31 which you prepared in the presence of all peoples —32 a light that will bring revelation to the Goyim and glory to your people Israel."