

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS: THE PLACE

(Advent 2018)

So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in strips of cloth and paced him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:4-7)

“But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of your will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2)

THE EXAMINATION

(T for True; PT for Probably True; PF for Probably False, F for False)

- ___ 1. Bethlehem is located just five miles southwest of Jerusalem
- ___ 2. Bethlehem was well-known known for raising sheep
- ___ 3. There was snow on the first Christmas
- ___ 4. Mary came to Bethlehem riding a donkey
- ___ 5. Bethlehem is an exhaustive, three-day journey from Nazareth
- ___ 6. The innkeeper offered Mary and Joseph the use of his stable
- ___ 7. The “stable” was probably a cave
- ___ 8. Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem and that night, Jesus was born
- ___ 9. Jesus was born on December 25
- ___ 10. Mary wrapped Jesus in cloths and laid him in a wooden crèche

THE EXPLANATION

A. The City: Bethlehem

- 1. Bethlehem means the House of Bread
- 2. Bethlehem was known for sheep
 - a. Lambs were born in Bethlehem
 - b. Each first born lamb was set aside for sacrifice
 - c. People would purchase these lambs to sacrifice for their sins

“Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)

B. The Weather

- 1. The weather along the Mediterranean is usually mild year-around
- 2. We have no evidence Jesus was born on December 25

C. The Arrival

- 1. Many think Jesus was born the night Mary and Joseph arrived, but the text doesn't say that

“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born.” (Luke 2:6)

- 2. Bethlehem is seventy miles from Nazareth - a vigorous three day walk

D. The Inn

“There was no room for them in the inn?” (Luke 2:7)

- 1. The word Luke selects for “inn” (*katalyma*) is not a commercial inn
- 2. Luke uses the word for commercial inn (*pandocheion*) in Good Samaritan

“Then [the Good Samaritan] put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.” (Luke 10:34)

- 3. In Luke 22:11 (*katalyma*) means guest room

“Say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples.’” (Luke 22:11)

- 4. Homes in Jesus' day were often built with a guest room

E. The Manger

- 1. Homes in Jesus day were often built with an indoor stable
- 2. The manger would normally be on the floor

THE ELUCIDATION

- A. Christmas is about the incarnation—God taking on our flesh
- B. Jesus comes into our ordinary world and joins our lives in the ordinary ways and places we live them.