



THE FIRST HOUSE

Luke 2:1–20

¹And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. ⁴Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into 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 wife, who was with child. ⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

¹⁰Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” ¹⁵So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Joseph was a descendant of King David, therefore he returned to David's hometown.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

—Micah 5:2

¹⁹But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

—Luke 2:1–20

Read Luke 2:1–20

In Bible times, an inn was usually a person's house where extra rooms were rented out for a price. An inn provided protection from the elements, as well as from robbers. A visitor would enter through large gates into a courtyard where the animals were kept in a stable. Encircling the courtyard were various rooms with either a door or a curtain for privacy, depending on the wealth of the innkeeper.

It is of note that when Jesus was born, He was not born in the comforts of home or even a private room. There was no door to close, or curtains to draw across for privacy. He was born in an open stable where domesticated animals were kept.

It is only natural to expect the Son of God, having left His throne in heaven, to have the most exquisite lodging and birth site available. Yet, this was not the choice of our Lord and Savior.

The first visitors were not sophisticated religious men, royalty, or the elite of society. No, they were shepherds, men who slept all night with animals in open fields. It was these men who were given a divine invitation from angels to meet the newborn Messiah.

In this first house, we glimpse the humility of our Lord, and also His willingness to take the lowest place that He might be accessible and available to all rungs of society. The apostle Paul aptly wrote, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Jesus is not looking to reside in the best house in town. He is looking for any house that will allow Him entrance to make His presence known.

As you study this first house that Jesus came to, consider afresh the humility and glory of Jesus' birth.

1. Use Luke 2:1–5 to list the factors that caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem.
 - a. The circumstances of Jesus' birth
 - b. The conditions of Jesus' birthplace
2. Use Luke 2:6–7 to share any insights you glean concerning:
 - a. The circumstances of Jesus' birth
 - b. The conditions of Jesus' birthplace
3. From Luke 2:8–20, comment on the following:
 - a. What the shepherds saw
 - b. What the shepherds heard
 - c. How the shepherds responded

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Augustus Caesar was the emperor, but God was in charge, for he used Caesar's edict to move Mary and Joseph eighty miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem to fulfill his Word. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his fathers to record his name, occupation, property, and family.¹

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This Caesar was the first Caesar, and he was governing the whole known world in 31 BC–AD 14. It was not a republic, but an empire, in which he was the law and could determine the law by his own will.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shepherds were not permitted to testify in court, but God used some humble shepherds to be the first human witnesses that prophecy had been fulfilled and the Messiah had been born. As a result, “all who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished.”²

- d. What the shepherds did
 - e. What the shepherds found
 - f. What the shepherds reported
 - g. How the shepherds reacted
 - h. Mary’s response to all these things
4. Consider again the angel’s message from Luke 2:10–12 by responding to the following phrases:
- a. *Behold*
 - b. *Good tidings of great joy*
 - c. *To all people*
 - d. *Born to you*

- e. *The city of David*
 - f. *Savior*
 - g. *Christ the Lord*
 - h. *Sign to you*
 - i. *You will find*
 - j. *A babe wrapped in swaddling cloths*
 - k. *Lying in a manger*
5. What is your greatest takeaway concerning Jesus in His first earthly house?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is thought by many that these shepherds kept the lambs for the temple sacrifices. If so, they were the first ones to see the Lamb of God who was to take away the sins of the world.

—Pastor Chuck Smith

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Since the animals that the shepherds were caring for were probably temple sheep, these shepherds would have had access to many people to share their testimony, especially those going into the temple to offer sacrifices and celebrate feasts.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus was wrapped in swaddling cloths at His birth and wrapped in grave cloths at His death (John 19:40).