

A BABY CHANGES OUR WORLD

Part 1

The stable in a cave

“Hurry to the stable, Matthias. We need you!”

I look up and see Mom waving her hands excitedly as she calls me, so I immediately reply, “I’ve got the Inn’s ox and it’s walking slowly after drinking at the stream.”

I pull harder on the ox’s rope tether encouraging it to move along faster and then yell “Feed time!” It understands and picks up its pace.

Since I already swept the stable inside the cave and put on a layer of fresh straw, I wonder why Mom is calling me so urgently.



*Fig. 1. A Stable Cave and wood manger
in Bethlehem area.*

“What’s the problem, Mother?”

“Tie the ox to the fence outside the cave. A couple just arrived and they are inside. I brought them a small jug of water to drink and some bread. The woman is trying to get some rest before giving birth to her baby.”



Fig. 2. Mary & Joseph travel to Bethlehem.

“What? Why in a stable?”

“The innkeeper told them there is no room in the Inn nor place to stay in town. Thank God I overheard them and suggested to them to use the Inn’s stable cave at the bottom of the hill. The innkeeper agreed.”

“Oh, OK.”

As I think about it there should be no surprise at how over-crowded our little town of Bethlehem is today.

Once, my father told me Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David about a thousand years ago. He was chosen by God and the people to be King of Israel. He had a lot of wives and children—hundreds of descendants.

Mom told me last month that the new Roman Census for taxes in Judea requires everyone to return to their home town to register. In our case the descendants of David need to return to Bethlehem, the city of David. So, the Inn and homes of the townspeople are crowded with relatives. Bethlehem doesn’t have room for so many out-of-town visitors.



Fig. 3. Statue of King David.

The innkeeper is a good man. He says that since his is the only inn in town, he simply names it the “Inn.” It has 12 rooms - just big enough to serve a few caravans of traders each week who stop here for their overnight stay. Today it’s full of guests awaiting the Census that’s tomorrow at noon.

As I tie the ox to the outside fence I see a donkey tied close by. It looks tired and worn out. It probably belongs to the couple—they must have travelled a long way.

Since I’m the Inn’s stable boy, I grab an armful of feed from the outside bin and throw it into the hewn rock manger in front of the ox. The rain shower this afternoon moistened the barley and grass feed which now smell just right. The ox starts eating it right away.



Fig. 4. Hewn Rock Manger.

The donkey turns its head towards the ox, then to me. So I quickly grab another armful of feed and throw it into the broken wooden feed manger which I have to carry over to the donkey. The donkey seems grateful and bends its head low to get at the feed.

“Hurry Matthias! Look, here come Sarah and Isaac. That’s good! Sarah will take care of baby Isaac while you introduce them and yourself to the couple. I have to return to the Inn’s kitchen immediately. I’m very busy cooking the evening meal for the guests, but I’ll bring some food back here for everybody later.”

Mom dashes off just as my sister walks over from our home holding our brother in her arms. We live in the next cave—about 40 paces away from the stable cave.

Sarah greets me, “Matthias. You have feed and hay all over your sleeves and shirt! Did you get caught in the rain?”

As I brush off my clothes I reply, “Thanks. No, I ducked into a cave in one of the hills but the ox got pretty wet. The rain washed the dust out of the air and refreshed everything so now the flowers smell like perfume. Thank God, the storm passed quickly.”

When we enter the part of the stable that is inside the cave we greet the couple as we have been taught in our synagogue school. We bow and wish them peace, “Shalom!”

Little Isaac just giggles and makes funny faces. His laughing starts us all laughing.

We are greeted by a smiling young woman—she’s very pretty. And she’s very pregnant. The man next to her looks up and also smiles at the three of us.

“Shalom, children. We are very happy to see you,” the young lady nods and goes on to politely ask, “What are your names and how old are you?”

“I’m Matthias, the stable boy for this Inn. I’m nine years old. This is my sister Sarah; she’s eight years old, and takes care of our one-year-old brother, Isaac, while Mom is cooking at the Inn.”

The lady has a kind, lovely face and replies, “You all are so nice. What a wonderful family you are. We are grateful to your mother who helped us find this place of shelter during the rain storm. She even offered to help me deliver my first baby. We have been blessed by God through all of you.”

The man stands up to introduce himself and his wife. “Shalom, children. My name is Joseph and this is Mary. I’m a descendent of King

David of Bethlehem. We are returning to register ourselves and our baby who will soon to be among us—God willing. Matthias, your mother said I may ask you if you would take care of our donkey while we are here. Will you do that for us?”

Wow! No one greets me so politely and actually asks if I would take care of their animal—most people just curtly order me what to do. As a humble stable boy, I’m used to that. I feel very good about this courteous couple. He even reminds me of my father.

“Yes, of course I will. I like animals. They’re fun. And I love taking care of them. I’m happy you asked me. I just gave your donkey some feed and later will take it to water and brush it. It looks very tired.”

“Thank you. Yes, it carried Mary and our baggage a long distance for many days.” Joseph inquires, “May I ask you where your father is?”



Fig. 5. Sheep and Shepherds in a field.

I hesitate and look at Sarah, who nods to go ahead and tell them.

“Well, our father was killed, murdered, by a gang of thieves last year. He was a shepherd in these hills and owned a small flock. One night when he was alone in the Shepherds Field they stabbed him in the back and stole his sheep.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry to hear that,” Mary says sadly as she sighs.

Joseph appears angry and asks, “Were those marauders and murderers caught and brought to justice?”

“No. No one knows who they are. They escaped with the sheep during the night. Everyone thinks they herded the flock through the rocky southern desert roads so no one could track them.”

“We all grieved Dad’s death including the townspeople, and neighboring shepherds.”

“We no longer have relatives in the area who could help us. So, we lost our home and possessions to money lenders. Mom said we had to pay them back the loan father arranged to initially buy the sheep.”

“A month afterwards, Mom gave birth to Isaac. Later, she took the only job that was available—cooking at the Inn. In return, the innkeeper lets us use the cave next to this one for our home. His wife gives Mom the leftover food from the guests’ meals for us to eat. He hires me to be the stable boy for his Inn so Mom gets a little money for our needs.”

Joseph seems very surprised. “So, she is a widow raising three beautiful children. What courage, strength, and hard work! Praise God for preserving you after such a heart breaking tragedy.”

Sarah’s eyes start to tear as she listens to our family’s sad history repeated yet one more time. Mary notices and asks her if she and Isaac want to sit close by her. Sarah does, and the three of them hug each other closely for a little while.

Joseph breaks the tension: “Matthias, I am a carpenter by trade. Is there anything I can repair for you in your home or in this stable?”

His offer surprises me, “Hmm, yes. We only have a hewn rock manger for feed and water here at the entrance. I’d like to use our wooden

mangers as well to feed the animals. Sadly, they have fallen apart. We only use this stable for the Inn's ox and for the guests' animals when the courtyard stable is too crowded. So, our best wooden mangers are in the courtyard stable up by the Inn. Could you repair these two mangers?"

"Yes, of course. I'd be happy to do that." He goes out the cave opening and finds the donkey's manger already empty. Then he picks up the other wooden one next to the feed bin.

He laughs. "Looks like one of these wooden mangers also may have to serve as a mobile cradle for the baby tonight. I'll repair them right away."

Joseph takes out some carpenter's tools from one of his bags. He immediately begins to repair the mangers.

Mary smiles at him with pride. He looks so happy while he works with his hands.



*Fig. 6. Joseph leads Mary riding on a donkey
(Image Source: United States Postal Service®
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MULTI – DIMENSION LINKS

Click **Buttons/LINKS** to see and hear interesting Music Videos: Traditional, Modern, or New versions. All LINKS are to YouTube.



Traditional Christmas carol: “O Little Town of Bethlehem” with lyrics and beautiful scenes by United Studio Orchestra, Children's Chorus and The Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Link to YouTube.



Pop Modern: “Carola” sings a beautiful rendition of "Find My Way To Bethlehem" with orchestra. She is Carola Maria Häggkvist an excellent Swedish singer and POP songwriter. Link to YouTube.



New: "Almost There" sung by popular singers Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith. Lyrics included. Link to YouTube.



New: “Do You Have Room?” Song by Shawna Edwards. Link to YouTube.



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A BABY CHANGES OUR WORLD

Part 1

The stable in a cave

Multi-Dimensions: Click **Buttons/LINKS** to experience 3-D Tours, Photos, Videos, Maps, Bible References, Food Recipes and additional interesting information.



Tour with 3-D effects of the Stable Cave of the Nativity.

Beautiful panoramic photos of the birth place of Jesus in Bethlehem. Best on larger screen. You can move in 360 degrees circle or horizontal or vertical with mouse. See some of the original rocks as well as altars, candles, ceiling, and art work. Study scenes as much and as long as you want. No narration, only informative text (click !) and animated pictures (click →). Be patient - it is challenging at start, but well worth the time.



Tour with 3-D effects in Bethlehem and Nativity Church/Cave.

Excellent narrated tour. Detailed graphics of all scenes and close-ups. Moves quickly, but you can click pause. Free apps (Windows & Apple) but has some web-site ads. Not easy to navigate first time, but it is a rich treasure of info and sights. (For me, it was like visiting there again but without the crowds; learned more this time.)



Black and white photo

realistically depicts life around Bethlehem. A mother and children in a stable cave - surprisingly similar to Matthias' family in the story.

(Continue to next page: **Multi-Dimensions**)



Photo of a typical stable cave below a building on top of a hill in Bethlehem area.



Bread and other foods prepared in the Bible. From "Women in the Bible"



Map of possible routes of Mary and Joseph 100 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Blue path is most probable to avoid Samaria.



King James Version (KJV) with options for audio reading of text of the Nativity in Bethlehem. (Luke and Matthew Gospels)



New American Bible – Revised Edition with options for commentary and notes of Nativity in Bethlehem. (Luke and Matthew Gospels)



New International Version (NIV) text with options for footnotes and cross references to learn about the Nativity in Bethlehem. (Luke and Matthew)



Nativity of Jesus - Wikipedia. Multiple viewpoints analysis of Nativity with pictures and references.



Mary (mother of Jesus) - Wikipedia. Multiple viewpoints presented regarding Mary.



Joseph (husband of Mary) - Wikipedia. Multiple viewpoints presented regarding Joseph.

Figure # - Photo and Art Credits

Thankful and grateful for courtesy of:

Fig. 1. A Stable Cave and wood manger in Bethlehem area: Venturing Van Marels
ventingvanmarels.files.wordpress.com

Fig. 2. Mary & Joseph travel to Bethlehem:
LDS Media Library
lds.org/media-library/images

Fig. 3. Statue of King David:
Jastrow (Public Domain)
Wikipedia.org

Fig. 4. Hewn Rock Manger:
Rev. Chris Nichols
revjcn.org

Fig. 5. Sheep and Shepherds in a field:
Elizabeth Fletcher
Jesus-story-net.womeninthebible.net

Fig. 6. Joseph leads Mary riding on a donkey:
Holy Family, Christmas Forever Stamp, issued 2013.
Image Source: United States
Postal Service