

Good Evening! I just heard you reading about the birth of Jesus, especially the part of Jesus lying in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. I want to set the record straight because I know what really happened.

But first maybe I should introduce myself. My name is Josiah. I'm Joseph's uncle. Some members of my family didn't like the idea of the Romans occupying Jerusalem, especially after Herod the Great became the so called king of Israel under the Romans. So Jacob and his family moved north and settle in Nazareth.

We tried to stay in touch with our family every year when they came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The last time I saw Joseph, he told me that he was engaged and that he was busy building the house where they would live next.

After Caesar August called for a census, we knew family members would be coming back to Bethlehem. We had a steady flow of people in and out of house. Never really knew when anyone was coming because we didn't have any way to communicate over long distance.

Hospitality is really important to us. It is part of our culture. We would never turn anyone away if at all possible. Those of us who could afford to would build a guest room on our homes for just that purpose. Your Bible calls our guest room an Inn.

We were excited to see Joseph when he came to Bethlehem with Mary. But our guest room was already full. Since Mary was about to give birth, we knew they would need some privacy. So we made a place for them to stay in the stable that was attached to our house. It was where we kept our donkey for transportation and our goats for milk and sheep for wool. You might think of that room as your attached garage. It was warm, dry, safe and private.

My wife Sarah paid special attention to Mary and her needs. She sent a messenger to tell the mid-wife to be ready. She gathered up extra food, blankets and swaddling clothes for the baby. She kept listening for any sounds telling her they made need some help.

The baby was born during the night. Somehow they knew she was going to have a baby boy even before he was born. Mary was tired after the long trip and delivery, so we left them alone to rest and to welcome their newborn son.

Sometime that night I heard male voices coming from the stable. I recognized the voice of one of the men, Jake, a shepherd. I had known him for a long time. Jake could tell some wild stories. What would you expect from a man who spent almost every day in the field talking to his sheep.

They didn't stay very long. Jake did come to our door and told us an angel appeared to them in and said, *"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."* Then the angel was joined by heavenly choir singing *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

Their search brought them to our house, to our stable. You can't imagine how excited they were. I think they woke the whole town up on their way back to their sheep.

I know Sarah and I were excited. Christ the Lord was born in our stable. The Promised Savior had come to be with us. God had promised that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David. David was promised that the Savior would come from his family tree. Both Mary and Joseph were descendants of David. We had waited so long for the Savior to come. I never expected he would show up at my door.

When the baby was eight days old, the Rabbi came to our house for the circumcision, a sign of the Covenant between God the people of Israel. This was also the time the parents announced the baby's name. Mary and Joseph gave him the name "Jesus" which means Savior of the people. It had become a popular name after the Romans occupied our land. Our nation had a long history of being occupied and oppressed. Most people thought the Romans were our biggest problem. But I thought our lack of faith was our biggest problem. We were so busy trying to just get by that we didn't make the time to grow closer to God. The people of Israel needed to repent.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to dedicate him to the Lord when he was 40 days old. When Simeon, an old man who spent most of his time in the temple, saw Jesus he sang a song of praise to God and told his parents, *"Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel."* Jesus was definitely dedicated for a special purpose. He is the long expected Savior.

The family moved into the guest room in our house. I gave Joseph some repair jobs to do around the house. Some other people in Bethlehem put Joseph to work as well. Mary and Joseph told us about angels visiting them. The angel said, *"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* I didn't understand how Jesus would save God's people from their sins, but I knew that is why he came.

Sometime later Magi or Wise Men came to our house. They wanted to see the "Newborn King of the Jews." Before coming to Bethlehem, they stopped in Jerusalem and asked, *"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."* Herod's scholars told them to look in Bethlehem as the Prophet Micah had promised. After seeing Jesus, the Wise Men were warned in a dream not to go back to see King Herod, so they took a different way back to their home land.

Joseph had a dream the night the wise men left and was told to take Mary and the Baby Jesus and go to Egypt until the threat from Herod had passed. They left in the middle of the night. God was watching out for Jesus and His family. He escaped death at the hands of Herod the Great. The prophet Isaiah predicted his death that came about 30 years later when he wrote, *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”*

I was able to keep track of Jesus over the years. The more time I spent around Him, the more special I knew Jesus was. I'm glad I made room for Jesus at first with my animals, then in my home and finally in my heart. God kept His promise. Jesus is the Immanuel, God Sons with us to save us from sin and death.

Take some good advice from an old man. Don't shut Jesus out of your life. Make room for Jesus in your life. You'll be glad you did.