

Joke- Lee, A seven-year-old boy, was asked to say thanks for the Christmas dinner. The family members bowed their heads in expectation. Lee began his prayer, thanking God for his Mommy, Daddy, brothers, sister, Grandma, and all his aunts and uncles. Then he began to thank God for the food. He gave thanks for the turkey, the stuffing, the Christmas pudding, even the cranberry sauce. Then lee paused, and everyone waited ... and waited. After a long silence, the young fellow looked up at his mother and asked, "If I thank God for the Brussels sprouts, won't he know that I'm lying?"

Week 3 - The Innkeeper - THE DILEMMA OF BELIEF

We have been looking at a series of characters from that first Christmas. Two weeks ago we looked at Joseph who may have had a dilemma of doubt. Last week we looked at Mary with the dilemma of saying yes to what God had called her to. Then this week we are looking at the innkeeper his dilemma was the dilemma of belief.

John's Gospel concludes with an interesting summary verse that seems to allow for all kinds of wonder and imagination concerning the life of Jesus.

John 21:25 (NIV): 25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

While John and the other gospel writers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give interesting snapshots from different scenes of Jesus' incarnation lived out during his days on earth, so many people, all the places, and encounters including every detail and circumstance are not recorded.

However, it does not mean that they did not happen. And it does not mean that we cannot wonder, imagine, and think about what might have taken place in the details of Jesus' life.

I don't believe we do an injustice to the text so long as we do not become dogmatic on things that the Bible remains silent. It's ok to imagine and infer about what we do not know for sure based upon what we do have preserved before us in the pages of Scripture.

I for one often wonder what would have been if while in Nazareth they had faith. Scripture tells us Jesus couldn't do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

What could have been if they would have received Him.

What would have taken place if Adam and Eve would have simply obeyed what God had spoken. Questions like that are not wrong.

Back to our story, we do know some details concerning the birth of Jesus.

Luke 2:1-7 give us just enough to stir our imaginations about the time and place where Jesus made his arrival that first Christmas.

Luke tells us, In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also 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. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

In this recorded birth narrative from Luke, he situates Jesus' birth within a time and place in history. It happened when "Quirinius was governor of Syria." (v.2) The locations mentioned can be found on a map: Syria, Galilee, Nazareth, Judea, Bethlehem.

All are specific places with exact coordinates that can be verified and traveled to to this day. A census was underway because of a decree that came from the highest office of authority in the land: the emperor of Rome, Caesar Augustus.

Luke even states specific names of people beyond Caesar Augustus who are mentioned in Jesus' birth story: Quirinius, David, Joseph, Mary, and her firstborn son whom the Angel of the Lord said was to be named "Jesus" in the previous chapter.

Luke even gives us the specifics of what Mary did after she gave birth to Jesus. She "wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (v.7).

This is one of the places we get to infer and wonder. . .dream and consider.

One thing I wonder is that if the innkeeper really understood who Jesus was, would he have made other

arrangements? See it's easy to miss Jesus, the Savior of the world came in an unusual way.

It is healthy to stay curious when we read the Bible. How did Mary and Joseph know the inn was full? How did they make their way to a stable? Is it too much to think that someone answered the door to the inn when they sought a room for the night? It makes all the sense in the world to acknowledge that just because the Bible specifically does not mention an innkeeper at the sold-out shelter in Bethlehem, there likely would have been someone there to open the door and interact with the pending parents of the Son of God.

Somebody figured something out that night in Bethlehem when Joseph and Mary came knocking as her water was about to break. The inn was full, but the stable was usable to make some room for them to bed down for the night. There was a place for them to be placed. And the rest is history. But even within history, real emotions, thoughts, considerations and the unnamed characters that were present on that night still occurred. Again, we don't have

specifics, but we can wonder.

And we can contemplate without ever really knowing for sure how the birth in the barn may have caused the innkeeper to have a dilemma of belief.

Scholars and historians suggest the Jewish people of that day were expecting the arrival of a Messiah at some point soon to help restore Israel to their glory days. There were hopes and expectations for someone to come and help.

Perhaps the innkeeper did watch and see the entourage of shepherds proceed to his property later that night. Maybe he noticed the star shining over the shed out back. He may have taken a peek later that evening and helped as much as he could. Who knows, maybe he (and his wife?) shuffled others around and made room inside after things unfolded.

Show video (Innkeeper) - www.skitguys.com

The Bible doesn't say, but we can consider and wonder as long as we don't make a doctrine about what is not overtly

stated and written.

I think It's safe to say that whatever the innkeeper may have thought, done, or felt that night; he had no idea of the fullness behind what had taken place by the sovereign timing of God's plan. Don't overlook a specific detail that Luke gives in the text.

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

God's sovereignty means He does just the right thing in just the right way at just the right time, for His glory and for our good. The innkeeper may not have had a clue the timing was right, but God did.

In fact, the Apostle Paul later wrote about this specific time that happened in that specific place with those specific people that were described in the birth narrative.

Galatians 4:4–5 (NIV): 4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

The innkeeper probably had no idea he was in keeping with the perfect timing of God from all eternity's perspective. And the fact that the inn was full and the stable was about to be the maternity ward was all part of the plan. God decided to let the manger be the sign for the soon to be shepherds that would come and adore Him.

And while this, too, may have been an eye-opening experience for the innkeeper to observe, it's doubtful he knew what the motive was behind the birth of the baby in the barn

1 John 3:8 - "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

The advent of Jesus the Messiah was a declaration of war on the devil himself. The first cry of the Christ-child, that night in the hum of the city of David, was the shot heard round the world as far as the kingdom of darkness was concerned. The innkeeper probably did not have the full scope of that reality sinking in when it came to light that new life had just occurred out back.

Life came into the world and light began pushing back the darkness. Victory was on the horizon, and the works of the devil were in the crosshairs of the Creator. The plan from eternity was now in place and unfolding.

At least the innkeeper played a part in the plan. Somebody did. Somebody had space on the property and Mary and Joseph and Jesus were provided space to start the greatest rescue mission ever instituted. If it was "Stuart" the innkeeper, he did just what we sing about and "prepared him room."

Perhaps it was the beginning of a crisis of belief for him. Perhaps it could be for us. Let every heart prepare Him room. This was the action of the innkeeper. May it be the action and decision of our lives as well. There is always more going on than we fully may realize.

Join God in what He is doing and rest in His sovereignty today. God always does just the right thing in just the right way at just the right time for His glory and for our good.

So let's come and adore Him. Prepare Him room. Room in your heart, in your home, in your life.

Let me close with a poem called the Innkeeper the author is unknown:

Dearest God
Please never let me
Crowd my life full to the brim.
So like the keeper of
Bethlehem's Inn,
I find I have

No room for Him.

Instead, let my heart's door

Be ever open.

Ready to welcome

The newborn King.

Let me offer the best I have

To Him who gives me

Everything.

Neal A. Maxwell has said, "each of us is an innkeeper who decides if there is room for Jesus."

I think this time of the year there are some things we can learn from the innkeeper. As I mentioned early it can be easy to miss Jesus not understanding who this babe really is. Another lesson we can learn from the innkeeper, however, is that it is easy to be too preoccupied for Jesus. That first Christmas, there literally was no room for Jesus. And to be honest it's much the same way today.

I believe we need to step back from what occupies us and simply sit in the presence of the Lord and make sure we take time to make room.

Join us next week as we look at another character with another dilemma. The Shepherd with the joy dilemma.