

Chapter Three

**The King
Is Born**

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The King Is Born

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Prayer

Almighty and great God, Creator and Lord of all, You sent Your Son to live a sinless, servant life on this dusty earth, and to give up His life on a cross. As we now ponder the wonder of His conception and birth, empower our little minds to understand and embrace the meaning of these events for our own lives. Inspire us to shut our ears to the world's message about Jesus' birth, and to close our eyes to the materialism and seductions of society-at-large. May the message of the heavenly hosts continue to inspire us. May we proclaim constantly the Good News of Jesus' birth as did the shepherds of old. As Wise Men brought gifts to the Babe of Bethlehem, empower us, every day, to lay at Jesus' feet our very lives. We pray that You will sustain us in Your grace until we see Jesus face to face, and serve and praise Him forever in the Eternal Home that You have prepared for us. To You be all the glory, now and forever. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION 3A

The six segments in this illustration, and the accompanying explanations, help people understand the “real” Christmas story. Although the Bible’s real story is somewhat different from that which has emerged over time in Western cultural tradition, the insights offered in this section inspire many to think “outside the box” in relation to the story itself and its meaning for our lives. Note that still today people living in Bethlehem dismiss completely the notion that Joseph and Mary would have taken up residence in a stable. Had the people in Jesus’ day not offered the best of accommodation and hospitality to the Holy Family, they would have shamed themselves and their entire community.

ILLUSTRATION 3B

The house depicted in the illustration reflects the architectural style of Jesus’ day. A guest room was usually added at the second floor level—making it unnecessary to purchase additional land on which to build it. Houses resembling that depicted in the illustration can be seen still today in the Holy Land.



You Do the Digging

Chapter Three

- 1 Check out various Bible translations, and note any that refer to Jesus being born in a place other than an inn, Luke 2:7.

Today, more scholars and writers are aware of the fact that the word translated as “inn” in Luke 2:7 really means “guest room.” Although some present-day translations reflect this insight, many continue to refer to there being “no room in the inn.” No—a person’s salvation does not depend on understanding the real Christmas story. However, it is important that the biblical text be translated accurately. Incidentally, Arabic, Coptic, and Syrian translations of the Bible have always described Jesus being born in “the house” because there was “no room in the guest room.”

- 2 According to Matthew 2:11, where were the members of the Holy Family living when the Wise Men visited them?

In a house.

- 3 The Bible tells us nothing about the kind of house in which David was born; however, it does tell us that he built himself a house or palace in Jerusalem after capturing that city, 2 Samuel 5:11,12. Possibly, Solomon was born in it, 2 Samuel 5:13–16. Although the Bible does not describe David’s residence, it does describe Solomon’s palace complex, 1 Kings 7:6–12; 10:18–22.

In view of Luke’s Christmas narrative and Luke 9:58, what difference was there between the home surroundings of Solomon and those of Jesus?

Most likely, Solomon grew up in a rather grand residence. Jesus, however, grew up in a humble residence and never sought affluence.

- 4 After the death of David, what did Solomon provide for Bathsheba, his mother, 1 Kings 2:19?

Solomon provided Bathsheba with a throne to the right of his own.

How might Mary’s material lifestyle have compared with that of Bathsheba?

Mary would never have sought to live in affluence. And Joseph would not have been in a position to provide such for her.

- 5 The late postexilic writings known as the Apocrypha contain insights that enhance our understanding of New Testament events and teachings. One such book is Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus. Read Sirach 29:21–28. What does it have to say about:

- a. What things constitute the necessities of life?

Essential things such as water, bread, clothing, and a house.

- b. Being a host?

A host would never order a stranger to prepare food for him and serve him at table.

- c. The use of a guest room?

If the guest room of a home was already occupied, a host could not—and would not—ask those staying in it to move out to make room for a more recent arrival.



- 6 What do the contents of Chapter Three teach us about the importance of understanding cultural backgrounds when interpreting biblical events?

Biblical events often take on a richer meaning when their cultural background is understood.

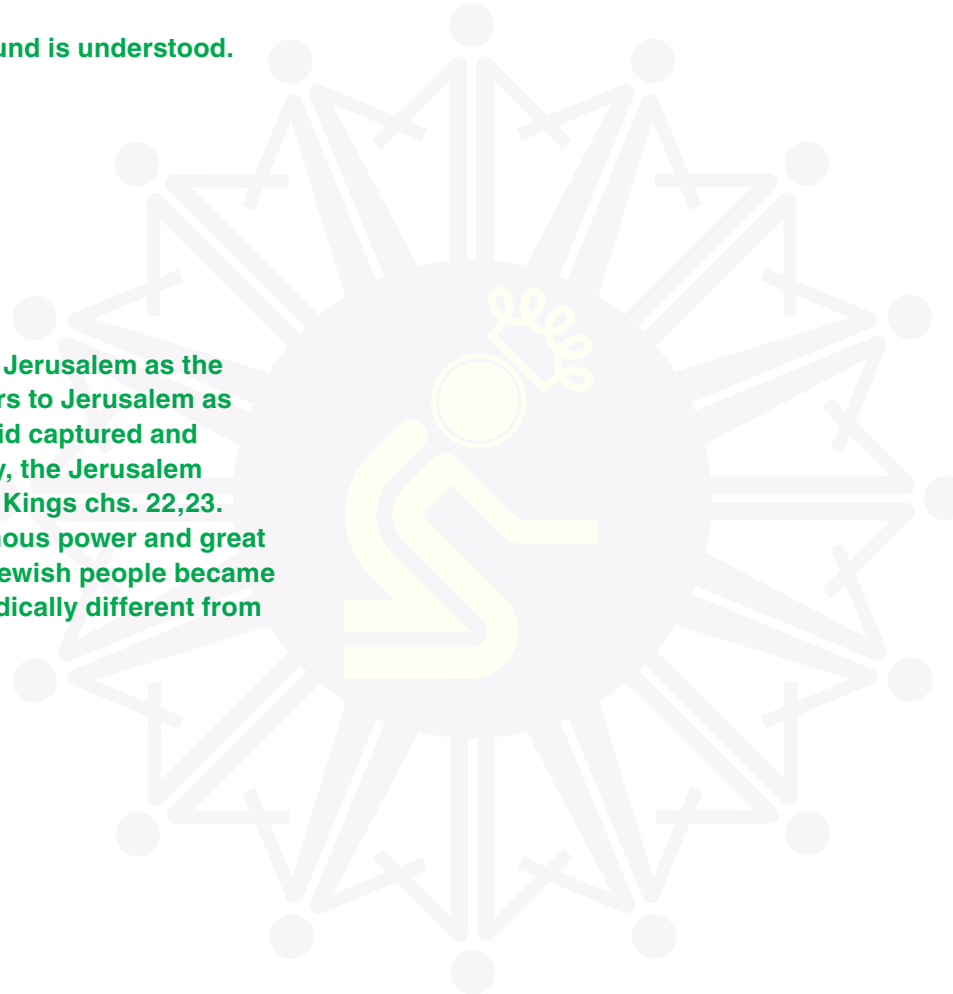
- 7 Read Ezekiel 5:5 and 38:12.

- a. How did Ezekiel view Jerusalem's location?

Jerusalem was located at the center of the world.

- b. What change took place with the birth of Jesus?

In a very real sense, with the birth of Jesus, Bethlehem replaces Jerusalem as the center of the world. Furthermore, although 2 Samuel 5:6–10 refers to Jerusalem as “the city of David,” Luke 2:7 assigns that title to Bethlehem. David captured and gained control of Jerusalem in a rather brutal manner. Eventually, the Jerusalem Temple became the only legitimate place for offering sacrifice, 2 Kings chs. 22,23. In Jesus’ day, Jerusalem’s political and religious elite had enormous power and great wealth—and eventually what had been the city of David for the Jewish people became the city of death for Jesus. The nature of Jesus’ kingship was radically different from that of David.



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