



The Three Houses of Christmas

Luke 2:1-7 reads,

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Life can feel topsy-turvy at times, but those who set foot in the Kuala Lumpur Upside-Down House in Malaysia could be forgiven for feeling a bit off beam. Generally the KL Upside-Down House is actually a house that has been constructed upside down, with everything fitted...you guessed it, upside down. Think beds and sofas on the “ceiling” and light shades on the “floor.” Everything is upside down as you start from the main living room to the kitchen, and then to the stairs that take you up to the rooms and so on. Outside the house, there is an upside-down garage complete with a car.

People love checking out or staying in unusual houses, and tourists enjoy posing for pictures on the “ceiling” of the fun attraction at Kuala Lumpur, which is Malaysia’s newest and tallest upside-down house—yes there are two more in Peninsula Malaysia!—the second one in Penang and the third one in Malacca.

The Christmas story also speaks of three houses. And it is these three houses that we want to look at.

The House of David

First of all, there is the House of David. As we turn our thoughts to Bethlehem and the events surrounding the birth of our Lord, let us go further back in the pages of Holy Writ and marvel at the unsearchable riches of God's prophetic Word. The birth of Jesus Christ was not an isolated event, but one intimately bound with history and prophecy. The coming of God's Son was determined in every detail in the highest counsels of the Almighty.

God's plan is revealed at His own pleasure, in His own time, to those of His choosing. He revealed it to faithful Abraham (Genesis 22:17-18). He revealed it to Nathan the prophet. Read for yourself 2 Samuel 7:11-16. In essence the Lord said to Nathan, "Tell my servant David, the Lord will build you a house. I will set up your seed after you. I will establish His Kingdom and throne forever."

Isaiah received the same revelation from God. Concerning the Messiah's reign, Isaiah said in Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon *the throne of David...*" Isaiah 11:1-2 says, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse [*Jesse was the father of David*], and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him..." And again, Isaiah 16:5 says, "And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in *the tabernacle of David...* hastening righteousness."

So did Jeremiah prophesy. Jeremiah 23:5-6 says, "Behold, the days come...that *I will raise unto David* a righteous Branch...and this is his name...THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And Jeremiah 33:15 says, "In those days...will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up *unto David...*"

All prophetic Scriptures say it: Messiah will come out of the *House of David*, to which house both Mary and Joseph belonged. The fulfillment of these prophecies in the Bible gives evidence that the Bible is the Word of God and hence without error.

The House of Bread

Not only is there the House of David, there is the House of Bread. The Magi or wise men of the east looked for the newborn King of the Jews in Jerusalem. Where should one expect to find the King but in the capital? But there they were otherwise enlightened. The King is not here, but in Bethlehem of Judea, for the prophet Micah had foretold it seven hundred years earlier. Not in Jerusalem, but out of Bethlehem shall come a Governor that shall rule over Israel.

At His first advent, Jesus came not as King, but commoner—unknown, uncared, and unnoticed by those who mattered. Jesus came also as servant, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He also came as the bread of heaven, saying in John 6:50-51, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread..."

It was therefore not without meaning that Jesus, the bread from heaven, came to be born in Bethlehem, the "*House of Bread*." By His being born there, the little town of Bethlehem has forever found a place of affection in the hearts of men and women who love the Christ-child. Everywhere at Christmas, the carol by Phillips Brooks recalls the Nativity story: O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!

But Bethlehem was also the city of David, the king after God's own heart, the one chosen to be the forebear of our Lord Jesus, aptly called "Great David's Greater Son". In God's providence, it was foreordained that the Son of David should also be born in the city of

David. By a convergence of events, it happened just as Micah foretold: an emperor's decree out of Rome sent Mary and Joseph out of Nazareth, at the right time, to the right place. Thus our Lord was born, not in Nazareth, not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. But it was God above who moved Caesar below! What about you? Do you see the unseen hand of God in your life?

The House of Accommodation

But the most significant house is the house of accommodation. This Christmas let us see the Nativity scene in its true light. Try and erase from our mind those multicolor Christmas cards sold by the millions by money-minded commercial houses, which give an altogether false idea of the circumstances of our Lord's birth. What we should do is to ask humbly for Holy Spirit enlightenment and instruction.

Reading verse 7 of Luke chapter 2 tells a great deal "in between the lines." No room in the inn! No room in the house of accommodation! Picture Mary "great with child" with Joseph at the door seeking an entry, at the end of a long and tiring journey, exhausted, hungry, perhaps cold and exposed. We who travel well understand another traveler's anxiety looking for a room for the night. Nothing is more daunting than to be told, "Sorry, house full."

Mary and Joseph looked at each other, faces downcast, hopes dashed to the ground. Perhaps, if they had money...they could try another place. But "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). God the Father sent His Son, from heaven's glory into a carpenter's home, so even before He was born, "he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2).

Yes, so our Lord was despised and rejected, even before he was born. Think again: those parents having their firstborn child; what pains and preparations we go through to make the labor safe for mother and child; the careful choice of obstetrician, of maternity hospital, and a hundred other details. But who was there to see to the birth of Jesus, to care for His mother, and to bathe the Holy Child? We simply read in cold print: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a *manger*"—the box to contain the cattle food.

All because "there was no room for them in the inn"; all because there was no room for them in the house of accommodation. Is there room for Jesus in your heart?

The fact that there was no room for Christ was indicative of the lot of the Son of God during His earthly ministry. The Savior coming in this fashion set the tone for the ministry that He would have; it showed the truth about His earthly life and ministry. In particular, it would show the world's attitude towards Him. The political leaders had no room for Him. Herod tried to do away with Him. Pontius Pilate left no room to seriously consider Christ, and he decided that he was not going to be responsible for what took place. Religious leaders did not receive Him. They rejected the Son of God and had no room for Him. They took counsel how they might rid themselves of Him. Just like the innkeeper, they had no room for Him. In summary, Christ's birth in that quiet little village of Bethlehem would characterize the rest of His earthly life. Christ was born there in that stable to show the world's attitude towards Him.

Is there room for Jesus in your heart? If you have not received Jesus into your heart, we urge you to ask Him to come into your heart—to take away your sin and give you the gift of salvation. Jesus the Son of God humbled Himself in being laid in a manger. He also humbled Himself to die for your sins on the Cross. Shouldn't you humble yourself and acknowledge that you are a sinner?

Will you leave no room to seriously consider Christ, like what Pontius Pilate did? Will you reject the Son of God and have no room for Him, like what the religious leaders did? Please don't. Don't reject Jesus. Come to Him this Christmas. Through the risen Christ, you can make all things right with God.

For those of us whose hearts have truly received Jesus, this Christmas, do something good for Jesus; this Christmas, tell someone of His grace.

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