

# Why Was Jesus Born in a Barn?

By Joe McKeever



I grew up on a farm. I know about barns. They are dirty and cold and the last place you'd ever want to bring a newborn baby. And yet, here is the Lord of heaven and earth allowing His Son—even willing Him! —to be born in a dirty stable. What are we to make of this?

I am certain there must be a hundred reasons why Jesus was born in that stable in Bethlehem, and just as sure that we know only a handful of them. The simplest answer is that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the local inn. But there has to be much more to it than that.

## One: It Was the Only Place Available

Jesus could have been born in the finest mansion, but it was not made available to Him. He goes where He is made welcome.

You will see it all through Scripture: "When you enter a city," Jesus told His disciples, "whoever does not receive you or heed your words, shake the dust off your feet." They were not to give God's truth to the hostile or disrespectful, for to do so would be

"casting pearls before swine." God goes where He is wanted.

Sometimes when I'm making this point to children, I'll ask them the old riddle: "Where does the 600-pound gorilla go?" They call out, "Anywhere he wants to!" And you would think that would be the answer to the question "Where does the Lord of heaven and earth go?" But it isn't. Listen to the Lord Jesus: "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me." Tell me if that is not the most amazing picture in the Bible—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humbly asking us to receive Him. He does not force Himself on anyone, but goes into homes and hearts where He is made welcome.

## Two: God Was Making a Statement About Himself

Jesus is not like any other royalty you've ever heard of. Kings come with great entourages, accompanied by pageantry and demands. Jesus was born in a stable to humble Jewish parents, with His only callers that night lowly shepherds. Look closely: God is telling us something about Himself.

Nothing about our God is like the kings of the earth. They're into appearances and image; God is all about truth and love. Over a century ago, the British pastor Charles Spurgeon\* said:

"How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cut their spears in sunder; He burns their war-chariots in the fire.

"How could kings accept the humble Savior? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's Son, and the fisherman's companion.

"How can princes find room for the newborn Monarch? Why, He teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition."

The prophets of old had said of the Messiah, "Behold, your king is coming to you, gentle, and

mounted on a donkey." One day, the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem just in that way: the King of kings and Lord of lords—riding on a burro. Not very grand or impressive by our standards. It's like forgoing the limo and entering town astride a bicycle.

Had Jesus employed image consultants, they would have advised Him to take a cue from Absalom, the son of David, who rode around the city in a chariot pulled by a team of horses and accompanied by fifty runners. Like modern rock stars, David's boy knew that the size of the entourage said volumes about the celebrity. But Jesus was not like any other "star." Anyone doubting that has only to see how Jesus was born (in a stable), how He lived (without a place to lay His head), and how He died (on a Roman cross, the object of slurs and slander and saliva).

### **Three: Where Else Should a Lamb Be Born?**

In the early days of the human race, Cain brought vegetables to the Lord as an offering, while his brother Abel brought a lamb. One lamb for one person. Later, as God was preparing to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses instructed the people to kill a lamb and smear its blood around the door to protect the family members. One lamb for a family.

Then God gave Israel instructions for the annual Day of Atonement offering. One lamb would be slain for the nation. Eventually, in the New Testament, we see John the Baptist announcing that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Someone has said the entire story of redemption is summed up in three lines of Scripture:

"Where is the lamb?" (Gen. 22:7).

"Behold the Lamb!" (John 1:29,36)

"Worthy is the Lamb!" (Rev. 5:12).

Years ago, my seminary professor, Malcolm Tolbert, wrote an article asking and answering the question why Jesus was born in a stable. Had Jesus been born in the mansion on the hilltop, Tolbert said, few people would have felt welcome in His presence. But He was born in a barn; anyone can come there. The lowly shepherds did not hesitate to enter a stable and bow before the Child.

Then and now, anyone willing to humble himself may come to Jesus. — Pulpit Helps  
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\*Source for the Spurgeon quote: *The Christ of Christmas* by James Montgomery Boice, Moody Press, 1983, p 64.