



## Intro

Today, we are starting a two-part series about the first Christmas called, “No Room.” You may know already that Jesus was born in less than ideal conditions. You may have even heard the key verse of the Bible on which this message is based.

*Luke 2:7 KJV – 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.*

When Jesus was born, the world was not ready for Him; it did not make room for Him, and the world as a whole did not receive Him well. Even today, many people so struggle with what it means to make room for Jesus that they end up having no room for Him in their own lives.

I want to invite you on a journey with me to uncover the events and details surrounding the birth of Jesus. We are going to peel back the layers of cultural context to get at an understanding of the situation in life in which Jesus was born. In order to begin that journey, let’s read some more about the bigger context before the verse we just read.

## The Journey to Bethlehem

*Luke 2:1-5 ESV - In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

[Teacher Note: I have provided a summary of the setup for these verses of Scripture below. Feel free to summarize differently according to the maturity and familiarity of your group.]

Let’s step back just a little so you know what is going on in this story as a whole. Mary and Joseph were young and poor. They were probably teenagers, somewhere around sixteen to nineteen years old. They were

engaged and promised to each other by their parents, which was the custom. Mary and Joseph both received an angelic vision that they were to give birth and raise Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah. Both of them wrestled with the responsibility of this calling., Mary left for a period of time and went to her relative's house and Joseph contemplated breaking the engagement quietly. In the end, they agreed to trust God, get married, and have the baby. As they got close to the time the baby would be born, a census was ordered by Ceasar Augustus. Typically, Mary and Joseph would have stayed in Nazareth, which was Mary's hometown, to have the baby, but because of the census, they had to return to the ancestral home of Joseph, which was Bethlehem.

Now that the full context of what was occurring is clear, you can begin to understand the less than ideal situation surrounding Jesus' birth. Here are a couple of things so far: Jesus was born to parents who were poor working people, the engagement was almost called off and Mary and Joseph had to travel a long distance just at the time Jesus was expected to make His entrance.

In the midst of it all, while the world might not have been ready in making room for Jesus, God had already been making room for Him through an ancient prophesy from Micah, which was written 700 years prior to the birth of Jesus. It was prophesied that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem.

*Micah 5:2 - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

While this prophecy would have been known by Jews of this time period and maybe even known by Mary and Joseph, the prophecy didn't make the journey any easier for a very pregnant Mary. It was 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and traveling on the back of a donkey would have taken 4-5 days.

[Teacher Note: I contextualized this distance for my students. I live near Chattanooga, TN, so I said this distance would be like walking from Chattanooga to Knoxville. Make it a relevant, well-known distance for your students, and it will help them understand how long this walk was for Mary and Joseph.]

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