

Love was Born in Bethlehem

As the Christian faith spread into Europe and the West, many traditions developed, including additions to the stories of Jesus' birth. Revisiting the Ancient culture and setting reveals some helpful insights...

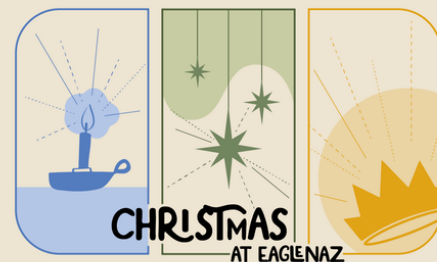
1 - A season of love - *What are some of your favorite holiday traditions, maybe those that are unique to your family?*

2 - Watch the Video for Advent Week #4 with Pastor Scott

3 - Read & Discuss the background of the setting of Jesus' birth -

- Check out the images of Israelite home in the box at right >
- **“No room in the *kataluma*...”**
 - **Read Luke 2: 1-7** - This passage describes the humble setting of Jesus' birth, with a few vital cultural and historical clues. Note that the frantic search for lodging and a heartless innkeeper do not appear anywhere in Scripture - these are later additions to the story for dramatic effect!
 - **Inn, or Upper Room?** - The last word of Luke 2:7 is the Greek word *kataluma*, which is translated in many English versions as “inn”, following the King James version which imagined Joseph and Mary like Medieval travelers. Luke, however, tells us that Joseph had family roots in David's lineage in Bethlehem, so it is more likely they would have stayed with family in the Judean village. If the “upper guest room” was already full of cousins and in-laws, Mary may have preferred the warm shelter of an animal pen for privacy. Middle Eastern tradition tells us that the women of the family likely gathered around Mary as midwives, so this group of women would be the first to welcome the Messiah - *not unlike the women who first saw and announced Jesus' resurrection in Luke 24:1-12!*
- *As you gather with family this holiday season, maybe some who travel a great distance and stay in your home, think about the travels of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, and the simple event that changed the world and our eternity!*

Come, let us adore Him!



An Israelite home built into the limestone slopes of the Judean hill country near Bethlehem. Homes were often constructed around existing natural features like caves



Inner courtyard - the upper door on the right is for the *kataluma*, the lower left door enters the animal pen.



Israel Museum exhibit of an Ancient Israelite home - with the upstairs *kataluma* and animal pen with manger below

