



# Keswick Ministries

HEARING • BECOMING • SERVING

*Good news of great joy  
for all the people*



*"She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them" Luke 2:7*

We all have our Christmas traditions. Some are based on the truth, and some live on because, well, they just do. They're part of our collective memory, our story, our rituals. Think of Santa Claus, the reindeer, the carols, the nativity plays, the Christmas cards.

When it comes to Father Christmas, we may go along with the traditions for a bit of fun, but we don't think they're true. But we may not be aware that some of our traditions about the birth of Jesus may be traditional rather than historical.

We can think Jesus was born in a stable because he was "placed in a manger" (Luke 2:7). But in Jesus's day, animals were kept overnight inside part of the one-roomed house. Mangers were in the home. And the word often translated "inn", where "there was no room" (Luke 2:7), is now recognised as the guest part of that same house. It was probably already occupied by other relatives.

So Jesus wasn't born away from ordinary life. It was inconceivable in that culture that a heavily pregnant woman would have been left to fend for herself, or that Joseph, returning to his family home, had to go to an Airbnb. No. Jesus was born right in the heart of the home.

Does it matter? Yes. Traditions about the stable put distance between us and Jesus. Far away, long ago, different, distance. Safe distance. But, as one writer, Ian Paul, puts it, "In the Christmas story, Jesus is not sad and lonely, some distance away in the stable, needing our sympathy. He is in the midst of the family, and all the visiting relations, right in the thick of it...." That's the incarnation. Jesus is one of us. He comes to us in the ordinariness of our lives. And yet he is a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity."



James Robson

Ministry Director

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