

NT 03: The Nativity

Monte F. Shelley, 23 Jan 2011

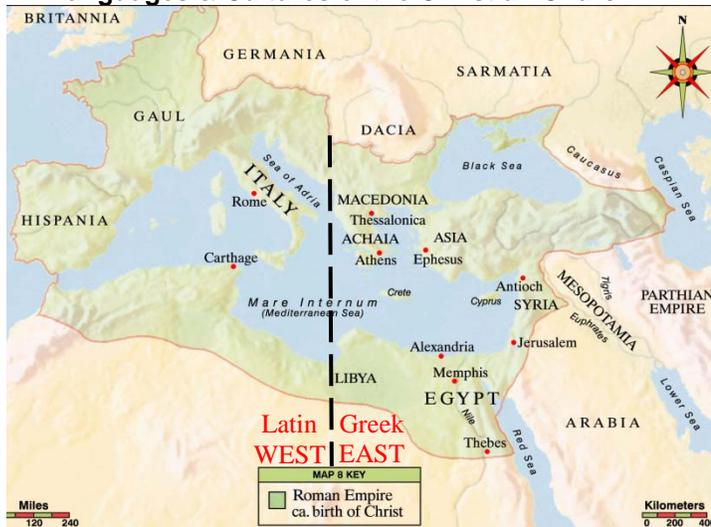
Quotes

- A girl told her mother, “You said God created man. Why did Dad say man evolved from monkeys?” Her mother said, “I told you about my side of the family and he told you about his.”

1. New Testament Timeline

Year	Event
c. 37	Herod became King
7–5, 2, 1 BC	Jesus was born
4, 1 BC, AD 1	Herod died
AD 30 or 33	Jesus crucified, buried, and resurrected
60	Mark’s Gospel to Romans; (maybe John’s Gospel)
c. 65	Peter and Paul martyred
70	Temple, Jerusalem destroyed; Pharisees lead Jews
70+	Matthew’s Gospel to Jews (Pharisees)
75	Luke’s Gospel to Greek Gentiles
90s	John’s Gospel to Saints
c. 200	Old Latin translations
249–260	Roman emperors had Christian books burned
313	Constantine accepted Christianity
325	Nicean council (1 st ‘Catholic’ council)
380	Marriage of Church and State
382–405	Latin Vulgate became official Roman Catholic Bible
431	Syriac /Aramaic Christians separate (3 rd council)
451–491	Coptic, Ethiopian, and Armenian churches separate
1054	Greek speaking Christians separate (Greek Orthodox)
1517	Protestants begin separating (Martin Luther) Bible translations from Hebrew & Greek, not Latin

2. Languages & Cultures of the Christian Church



Jesus and his apostles spoke Aramaic, a sister language of Hebrew. Most scholars believe the NT was written in Greek. However, some believe that NT books written for Aramaic speaking Jews (e.g., Matthew) were written in Hebrew or Aramaic. To help missionary work, books of scripture were translated into other languages. There are ancient Christian manuscripts in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Coptic, etc

According to tradition, some apostles went to Arabia, Persia, and India. Paul went to Arabia (Gal 1:15–17) shortly after his conversion. Since Arabia, Persia, and India were not part of the Roman Empire, they were never part of the Catholic Church. Today, there are about 10,000,000 Arabic speaking Christians.

3. New Testament translated from Greek manuscripts

Greek New Testament manuscripts were preserved by the Catholic Church. There are over 5300 manuscripts that scholars divide into three families (JWNT). The vast majority (95%) are in the same family as the Greek text used by the King James (KJV) translators. Many other English translations are based on another family that is about 80% the same as the KJV text.

For most individuals, access to sacred writings was limited to a single copy in the synagogue or the house-church for early Christians. NT books became more widely available around AD 100 to 300. Scriptures were read aloud in churches and members needed to remember or memorize what they heard. Repetition and patterns helped listeners remember better. (JWNT 62–63)

4. The Four Gospels

GR *eu* (good, well) + *angelos* (messenger, angel)

GR *euangelizo* (verb) = good + bring news/tidings/messages

GR *euangelion* (noun) = good + tidings/news; → evangelical Gospel (OE *godspel* = god + news/tidings/story)

Mark: Peter’s scribe in Rome, wealthy, educated [7% unique].

To the Romans (gentiles); emphasizes *doings* not *sayings* of Jesus; Jesus is God and on earth so don’t look to Zeus, Jupiter

Matthew: tax collector [45% unique].

To the Jews (Pharisees); persuade the Jews that Jesus is the promised Messiah; about 100 OT quotes.

Luke: physician, missionary, educated [59% unique]

To the Greeks (gentiles); Jesus is savior of Jews and Gentiles, men and women; teachings and doings; importance of Temple

John: fisherman [92% unique]

To the Saints; Christ’s divine nature as Only Begotten; Christ was a great, spiritual, divine teacher; Light, Life, Way for all men

5. Different Interpretations of the Bible

Joseph: The Presbyterians were most decided against the Baptists and Methodists, and used all the powers of both reason and sophistry to prove their errors, or, at least, to make the people think they were in error. On the other hand, the Baptists and Methodists in their turn were equally zealous in endeavoring to establish their own tenets and disprove all others. In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? (JS—H 1:9–10)

6. Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23–38)

Matthew, writing to the Jews, begins with Abraham (father of Jewish people) and ends with Joseph. Luke, writing to gentiles, begins with Joseph and goes back to Adam (father of all people).

From Abraham to David they are almost the same, but from David on they are different. Some people believe Matthew gives Joseph’s genealogy while Luke gives Mary’s. Others believe “Matthew gives a legal descent and includes several adopted children, such adoption carrying with it legal rights, while Luke gives a natural descent through actual parentage.” (BD Genealogy; Ogen 1:31)

Matthew mentions 4 wives Tamar (Judah), <Rahab> (Salmon), Ruth (Boaz), and the wife of Uriah (David). Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth were Gentiles, and Bathsheba married a Gentile (Uriah the Hittite). Rahab was a harlot before her conversion. Tamar played the harlot with Judah. Bathsheba and David committed adultery.

Why did Matthew mention these women?

7. Joseph (Matthew 1)

¹⁸ Now [JST as it is written] the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

just [or righteous] → zealous in keeping the Law of Moses

²⁰ But ... the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Jesus = Yeshua (salvation, Savior) in Aramaic

²² Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ²³ Behold, a virgin ... shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name <Immanuel>, which being interpreted is, God with us.

God [Jehovah] himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. (Mos 15:1)

²⁴ Then Joseph ... did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: ²⁵ And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Naming the child → father or adoption with full rights as heir

8. Wise men (Matthew 2)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem ... there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east <or when it rose>, and are come to worship him. ³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes ... together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, ⁶ And thou Bethlehem ... out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. ...

¹¹ When [the wise men] were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and ... they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed ... another way.

Where did the wise men (*magi*) come from? Persia, Arabia?

How many wise men? 3, 12, ... (We three kings of Orient are)

What did Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh symbolize?

¹³ When they were departed ... the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, ... flee into Egypt ... until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: ¹⁵ ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

¹⁶ Then Herod ... was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. ...

How many sons were killed?

Who else killed Israelite boys?

How did John the Baptist survive? (Matt 23:35; TPJS 261)

¹⁷ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by <Jeremiah> the prophet, saying, ¹⁸ In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation,

and weeping, and great mourning, ... ¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ Saying, ... take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. ²¹ And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²² But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judæa ..., he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, ... ²³ he ... dwelt in ... Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Isaiah (11:1) prophesied that a 'Branch' (*netzer*) would grow out of the root of Jesse (the Davidic line) and Jesus would be a Nazarene (*notzri*). Both Hebrew words come from the same Hebrew root. (Ogden 66)

9. Angel appeared to Zacharias (Luke)

⁵ In the days of Herod ... [a] priest named Zacharias... and his wife ... Elisabeth. ⁶ ... were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. ... ⁷ And they had no child ... and they both were <well along> in years. ...

In Israel, being childless was a major tragedy. The Jewish rabbis said that seven people were excommunicated from God and the list began, 'A Jew who has no wife, or a Jew who has a wife and who has no child' (Barclay - Luke pg 10). If a woman remained childless after ten years of marriage, it was considered grounds for divorce, since having a family was one of the important reasons for marriage. Barrenness was thought to be a major sign of God's disfavor and a result of divine judgment. (DBlog 12/14/09)

⁹ His lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple. ... ¹⁰ And the whole multitude ... were praying <outside> at the time of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared ... an angel ... standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. ... ²¹ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

The priest who attended to the incense service entered the Holy Place, and received from his assistant the incense. It was placed into his cupped palms. ... The coals from the outer altar were placed on the top of the inner altar and then the assistant retired from the room. The priest was left in the sanctuary alone while all of the other priests were waiting outside. The Jewish writings say that after the overseer gave the signal to burn the incense, the priest began to let the grains fall slowly from his palms across the top of the altar. When the entire chamber filled with the cloud of incense, the priest prostrated himself in adoration and went out of the sanctuary (Mishnah Tamid 6:3).

The scene just described happened every morning and evening. Whenever the people saw the smoke of the incense offering, ... they fell down before the Lord and spread their hands out in silent prayer. They arose when the priest who had made the offering came out to recite the blessing.

Going into the Holy Place always carried with it a sense of danger (see 2 Chr 26:16-23). And there was a rabbinic tradition that if a priest were going to die, an angel would be standing on the right side of the altar of incense (Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 42c). The priests were admonished to quickly come out after completing their duties lest they "*terrify Israel*" and cause the people to fear that their prayers were not accepted. To show his relief at making it out in good condition, the priest sometimes prepared a feast for his friends the hour he came forth (Yoma 7:4). (DBlog, 12/15/09)

10. Angel appeared to Mary (or Miriam) (Luke 1)

²³ [Zacharias] departed to his own house. ²⁴ And ... his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, ... ²⁶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent ... ²⁷ To a virgin ... name[d] Mary. ²⁸ And the angel ... said, Hail [greetings or Ave (Latin)] ... the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women. ... ³⁶ Thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her. ... ³⁹ Mary ... went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; ⁴⁰ And entered into the house of Zacharias, and ... Elisabeth. ... ⁵⁶ Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

“Families with priestly lines often resided in the region of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the likely location of Luke’s ‘hill country ... into a city of Juda’ (Lk 1:39)” (JWNT 118)

11. Birth of Jesus (Luke 2)

¹ In those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all [JST his empire] should be [GR enrolled or registered]. ...

⁴ And Joseph also went up from ... Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. ... ⁵ To be [enrolled] with Mary his espoused wife, <who was expecting a> child. ...

⁶ While they were there, <the time came for the baby to be born>.

⁷ 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.

Tradition: Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem *late at night*. The *innkeeper* said there was ‘no vacancy’ in the inn because *so many people came to be taxed*, but that they could stay in the *stable*. *That night Jesus was born* and put in a manger.

12. When did they arrive in Bethlehem?

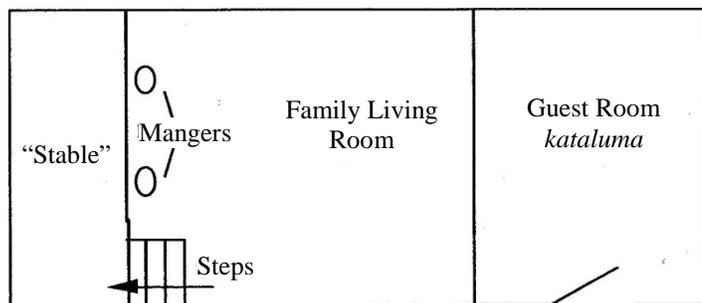
Tradition: Mary and Joseph arrived late at night and Jesus was born that night.

- When did they arrive?
- Would a pregnant woman within a week of her due date agree to walk or ride a donkey for 5 days?
- How long before the due date would a wise woman and a considerate husband make the trip?
- How would an unmarried pregnant woman (4 months along) be treated in Nazareth?
- Would she have a reason to move to get a fresh start?
- Would Joseph have considered moving to Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy?
- How long did they plan to stay?

13. Where was the manger?

Tradition: Mangers are made of wood and used to feed animals. They are found in stables away from where people live.

Middle East: Typical village home in Palestine



“Simple village homes often had but two rooms. One was exclusively for guests. That room was attached to the end of the

house or ... on the roof ... (1 Kgs 17:19). The main room was a ‘family room’ where the entire family cooked, ate, slept and lived.” They slept on mats that they would take up in the morning (Matt 2:9–11). “The end of the room next to the door, was either a few feet lower than the rest of the floor or blocked off. ... Each night into that designated area, the family cow, donkey, and a few sheep would be driven. And every morning those same animals were taken out and tied up in the courtyard of the house. ... A guest room [was on the flat roof], or ... the end of the house. The door on the lower level serves as an entrance for people and animals. The farmer wants the animals in the house each night because they provide heat in winter and are safe from theft. ... The elongated circles represent mangers dug out of the lower end of the living room. ... If the family cow is hungry during the night, she can ... eat. ... Mangers for sheep can be of wood and placed on the floor of the lower level.” “Such homes can be traced from 1000 BC up to 1950.”

Several verses imply such a house. One lamp on a candlestick gives “*light to all* ... in the house” (Matt 5:15). “The woman had a fat calf *in the house*” (1 Sam 28:24). When Jephthah vowed to sacrifice whatever came out “of the doors of my house to meet me,” he apparently expected an animal to come out (Judg 11:31). After healing a woman on the Sabbath, Jesus asked, “Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?” (Lk 13:15) In an ancient Arabic New Testament, this verse says, “does not every one of you untie his ox or his donkey from the manger *in the house* and take it outside and water it?” Early Christians believed Isaiah was referring to Jesus in the manger when he said, “The *ox* knows his master, and the *donkey* his owner’s *manger*” (NIV Isa. 1:3). Since the second century, an ox and a donkey have been included in art and nativity scenes. “But that manger was in a warm and friendly home, not in a cold and lonely stable.” (Bailey-Birth)

14. No room for them in the inn

Tradition: The *innkeeper* had *rented all rooms* in the inn (motel or hotel) because *so many people came to be taxed or for Passover*. “*No space* (GR topos) *for them in the guestroom* (GR kataluma).”

In the Middle East where hospitality is a sacred duty, even simple village homes described above often had only two rooms with one used only for guests. Because of this code of hospitality, Christ’s disciples could travel without purse or scrip and expect food, lodging, and protection from virtually any home (Lk 10:4–12).

When Luke says Mary laid the baby “in a manger,” the (Palestinian) reader instinctively thinks, ‘Manger—oh—they are in the main family room. Why not the guest room?’ ... ‘Because there was no place for them in the guest room.’” “No unkindness or lack of hospitality is implied when the Holy Family is taken into the main family room of the home. ... The host is not expected to ask prior guests (or a recently married son) to leave. Such would be quite unthinkable and ... unnecessary. The large family room is more appropriate in any case.” “A private home would have bedding, facilities for heating water and all that is required for any peasant birth. The churches of the Middle East, for two thousand years, have never seen an ‘inn’ in the story. The oldest translation of the Gospels into any language is the Old Syriac that dates from the second century. In that version, the key word *kataluma* is left out. The Old Syriac reads simply, ‘There was no space for them.’ The Peshitta Syriac (3rd to 4th centuries) offers, ‘There was no space for them where they were staying’; and the most common Arabic translation says, ‘There was no space ... in the *manzil* (house).’”

“To summarize ... the holy family traveled to Bethlehem, where they were received into a private home. The child was born, wrapped and ... ‘put to bed’ ... in the living room in the manger that was either built into the floor or made of wood and moved into the family living space. ... The guest room was already occupied by other guests. The host family graciously accepted Mary and Joseph into the family room of their house. ... The village midwife and other women would have assisted at the birth. After the child was born and wrapped, Mary put her newborn to bed in a manger filled with fresh straw and covered him with a blanket.” (Bailey-Birth)

15. Angel appeared to Shepherds (Luke 2)

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: ... I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day ... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *shall be a sign* unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ... ¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. ... ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen.

“Shepherds ... were poor, ... uneducated types ... who were close to the bottom of the social scale.” The upper classes would not welcome a visit from them. “The angels ... told the shepherds they would find the baby wrapped ... [and] lying in a manger! That is they would find the Christ child in an ordinary peasant home such as theirs. ... They found the holy family in perfectly adequate accommodations, not in a dirty stable. ... The fact that they walked out, without moving the young family [to their own homes], means the shepherds felt they could not offer better hospitality than what had already been extended to them.” “At the end of their visit they went home ‘praising God for *all* that they had seen and heard.’ The word ‘all’ includes the quality of the hospitality. If they had found a young mother with her first child in the middle of a filthy stable, scared to death with no older women around to help her, the shepherds would have said, ‘This is outrageous! Come home with us! Our women will take care of you!’” (Bailey-Birth)

16. Jesus was circumcised and later taken to the Temple

²¹ When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, ...

²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; ... ²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. ...

Mary had to wait 40 days before going to the temple to offer sacrifice. Before entering the temple grounds, Mary would have been immersed and ritually cleansed in a *mikvah* (Ogden 59).

²⁵ There was a man ... whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. ²⁶ And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus ... ²⁸ Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.

17. Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth (Luke 2)

³⁹ And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew, and <became> strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Mishnah: “‘At five years old one is ready for the scripture, at ten years for the Mishnah, at thirteen for the commandments, at fifteen for Talmud, at eighteen for marriage, at twenty for pursuit of righteousness, at thirty for full strength’” (Ogden 33)

18. Jesus at the temple (Luke 2)

⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem. ...

⁴³ When ... they returned, ... Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*. ... ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the [teachers], both hearing them, and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

^c JST ... *and they were hearing him, and asking him questions*.

⁴⁸ And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. ⁴⁹ And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist [or *knew*] ye not that I must be about my Father’s business <or in my Father’s house>?

19. Jesus grows to manhood (Luke 2)

⁵¹ And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

²⁴ *Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come*. ²⁵ *And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him*. ²⁶ *And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh*. (JST Matt 3:24–26; footnote to Matt 2:23)

He received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; (D&C 93:13)

Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3)

20. Summary of the Middle Eastern View

“With this understanding in mind, all the cultural problems ... are solved. Joseph was not obliged to seek a commercial inn. He does not appear as an inept and inadequate husband who cannot arrange for Mary’s needs. Likewise, Joseph did not anger his wife’s relatives by failing to turn to them in a crisis. The child was born in the normal surroundings of a peasant home sometime after they arrived in Bethlehem, and there was no heartless innkeeper with whom to deal. A member of the house of David was not humiliated by rejection as he returned to the village of his family’s origins. The people of Bethlehem offered the best they had and preserved their honor as a community. The shepherds were not hardhearted oafs without the presence of mind to help a needy family of strangers.” The King of Kings was not born in a palace or a dirty stable, but in the home of a peasant (probably a relative) with the help of a midwife and others as was customary. (Bailey-Birth)

Quote

Bruce R. McConkie: Unless or until some of the saints ... see in a dream or a vision ... where Joseph and Mary and Jesus spent that awesome night, we can only *speculate* as to the details.