

The 'Inn' and the Man

Two words for guest residences are used in Luke's Gospel:

καταλυμα (*katalyma* = lodgings, quarters, guest room)

πανδοχειον (*pandocheion* = lit. 'a place which receives everyone')

Luke 10.34: The Good Samaritan

*He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to **an inn** (*pandocheion*) and took care of him.*

Luke 22.11: The Passover

*'Tell the master of the house, "The teacher says, Where is **the guest room**, (*katalyma*) where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'*

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Question: Which word is used in Luke 2.7?

... and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Luke 2.7 uses the same word as Luke 22.11:

*'Tell the master of the house, "The teacher says, Where is **the guest room (katalyma)** where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"'*
*... and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the (katalyma) **guest room.***

καταλυμα (*katalyma* = lodgings, quarters, guest room)

πανδοχειον (*pandocheion* = lit. 'a place which receives everyone')

The word in Luke 2.7 is not a place where you can go without an invitation. It's a place for invited guests.

The 'Inn' and the Man

The likely scenario:

- The two-storey house was owned by a relative.
- A cellar, or cave, for holding animals and supplies had been dug into the limestone foundations.
- Higher-ranking visitors were staying in the “guest room” (*katalyma*) above the cellar, with the owner’s family staying on the top floor of the house.
- Joseph and Mary were well-treated, with the owner’s family or other relatives helping the mother and baby.

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Symmetry in Luke’s Gospel:

Jesus’ first days and last night on earth were spent in a house described as a *katalyma*.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Why then do all Bible Translations still call the place an 'Inn'?

Why do hymn and carol writers use phrases like

"From the squalor of a borrowed stable ..."

For Translators:

Church tradition is too strong for the scholars who do the translation to make the change.

For us:

We like to emphasise how low Jesus stooped to become human.

The 'Inn' and the Man

What sort of person was Joseph?

- **Who bore the shame of the unmarried pregnancy?**
- **What was Joseph's professional status?**
- **Who modelled faith for the child Jesus?**
- **Was Joseph a lifelong celibate?**
- **Was it an unequal partnership, or a marriage of equals, a model for us?**

Why is this important?

Because Joseph is the model of the married lay believer – a husband and a father.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Who bore the shame of the unmarried pregnancy?

Matthew 1.19

Her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream,...

So if Mary didn't bear the shame, people would have supposed that it was Joseph who had taken advantage of his fiancée before they were married.

The 'Inn' and the Man

What was Joseph's professional status?

Matthew 13.55

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?"

- One-man low-skilled operation?
- Skilled cabinet-maker?
- Builder / decorator running a business employing others?

Who did Jesus call to be his followers?

Mark 1.20 (James and John):

They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Who modelled faith for the child Jesus?

Luke 2.41

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom.

- Joseph had sufficient income to afford the expense of travel and accommodation
- Joseph was observant and practising
- Joseph would have attended synagogue in Nazareth – a male environment, Jesus brought there by his father

Mary would have been a great influence on Jesus' spiritual development. But Joseph's role was also crucial.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Was Joseph a lifelong celibate?

Matthew 1.25

But [Joseph] did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son.

Matthew 13.55

“Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? ”

- Was Mary a virgin throughout her life? The words 'brothers' and 'sisters' *could* refer to cousins.
- But - if Mary was a lifelong virgin, then Joseph was a lifelong celibate: he never had sex.

So instead of being the model of the married lay believer, a husband and a father, Joseph becomes the model of the celibate life.

The 'Inn' and the Man

Was it an unequal partnership, or a marriage of equals, a model for us?

When we lift up Joseph, we must not denigrate Mary. She is “a Jewish princess” – like Hannah the mother of Samuel in 1 Samuel.

Joseph and Mary worked together:

- to keep the baby Jesus safe
- to provide a home for the boy Jesus
- to give spiritual instruction
- to model married life in a God-centred environment

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'It is unlikely that a place as small as Bethlehem, not on any major trade route, would have had an "inn" (**pandocheion**). Joseph and Mary would have stayed with a relative in Bethlehem – probably the home of the sub-clan of David's descendants that Joseph belonged to.

Built into the limestone foundations of the two-story house would have been a cellar where animals were kept in cold weather. Heat (and smells) from this cellar would have penetrated upwards into the "guest room" (*katalyma*) which would have been reserved for higher-ranking visitors. The top floor of the house would have been where the owner's family stayed.

But Joseph and Mary were still relatives and people valued by the owner of the house and by others in the clan. They could expect to be well-treated, with nursing facilities for the mother and new-born.

Far from being rejected and neglected, they may well have had the best expertise that midwifery offered in those days.'