

Guide: (after picking up a new group) Hi, my name is **(biblically-chosen name)**. I will be your guide back in history to that very first Christmas. As we travel on this journey ask any questions you might have that pertain to first century Bethlehem. We will travel through according to your enrollment so please keep your group together and stay with me, your guide. **(Guide gets a head count before leaving)**

Guide: (Moving towards the city, stop and complete introduction prior to arriving at Census Booth) Back during the time of the birth of Christ, Caesar Augustus declared that all persons should go to their hometown and register for the census. We, being from the family of the house and lineage of David, must go to our home town of Bethlehem. After we register, we must enter the city and pay taxes. **(ref: Luke 2:3 "And everyone went to their own town to register")**

Census Taker: Caesar Augustus has decreed that the entire world should be registered and taxed, everyone in his own city. And you being from the house and lineage of David have come to Bethlehem, which is the city of David. May I have your name and the number of people traveling with your family? **(ref: Luke Chapter 2:1-4)**

Guide: (respond to the Census Taker with your biblically-chosen name and the number of people in your group, not counting yourself)

Census Taker: And where are you traveling from?

Guide: (respond with your biblically-chosen location picked in advance or "Joppa, on the coast")

Census Taker: Well, be careful today. The Romans are in a foul mood. Welcome to the city.

Guide: (moving towards the city gate) Everyone who enters must pay his taxes. The tax collector will only accept the Phoenician half-shekel. **(Guide moving group through the city gates)**

Roman Gate Guard: Halt! By order of Caesar Augustus! Have you been counted in the census? **(Roman Guard may harass the Guide to entertain and help traffic flow into the city. Be cautious of word choices.)**

Tax Collector: How many are traveling in your party?

Guide: (respond with total number in the group - counting yourself)

Tax Collector: Don't forget to count the slaves and animals. All must pay a half-shekel for every man, woman, child, and animal.

Guide: (moving away from the tax collector) I know he charges too much, but there is nothing we Jews can do. He pays the Romans what they require and keeps the rest for himself.

Guide: (passing by the Roman Guard house) That's where the Roman soldiers live. They act like they own this town, and they are always pushing people around. I'll be glad when the Messiah comes to be our king. Let's move along.

Roman Guard: (in a loud voice) Move on! No loitering!

Guide: (moving to Fruit Sellers) Jerusalem is only a half-day away and even though our marketplace is small, it's well traveled. Nomads often come to get their provisions. Look, someone is selling fruits.

Guide: Here we have some of our food merchants. There is not a lot of food left since so many people have come to the city for the census and to be taxed. Look at these pomegranates. They make such a refreshing drink. **(speaking to the fruit merchant)** Your fruit is so tempting to the eye.

Fruit Seller: Well, we have had lots of business with so many people coming for the census, so we don't have a lot left, but what we have is very good. We have delicious dates, figs, melons, and almonds **(pointing to the items as you speak)** and priced very reasonably. You need to purchase some now because later might be too late!

Roman Guard: (taking a piece of fruit without paying) Step aside, step aside....

Fruit Seller: (frustrated) Those Romans take anything they want, and we can do nothing about it.

Guide: What is the latest news or rumors we should be aware of?

Fruit Seller: I heard a rumor earlier today. They say a woman and her husband were sleeping in the stable because the city is so crowded, and she gave birth to a child in the stable.

Guide: A child, born in the stable!? There must be more people traveling here than I imagined. **(Move to the vegetables and begin inspecting the vegetables.)**

Vegetable Sellers: I heard about that woman too and her baby boy had to sleep in a manger. Here, could I interest you in some fine vegetables? Our prices are the most reasonable in the city. Look at the fresh onions, garlic and lentils. Delicious herbs too, and we have some olives and some honey. These foods would make a hearty meal for these weary travelers.

Guide: Well ... We still must find a place to stay before we think about our evening meal. Looking at this good food, we can certainly say the Lord has given us a bountiful harvest this year.

Guide: (moving to Oil and Lamp) Here we have the oil and lamp merchant. Oil is very necessary to our way of life.

Oil and Lamp Merchant: Yes, we have several different types of oil...castor oil, almond oil, and the most important is olive oil. It is used for cooking, lighting, skin care, perfume, medicine, and the temple rituals. Our olives are hand-picked, and each tree gives 10 to 15 gallons of oil.

Guide: What are you doing with the basket?

Oil and Lamp Merchant: We are filtering the olive oil to make it purer for use in the temple worship.

Guide: (pointing at a lamp) Will you save me this lamp? I broke one like it this morning.

Oil and Lamp Merchant: I'll put it away for you.

Guide: (moving to wine merchant) Does your wine taste as good as your grapes look?

Wine Merchant: Certainly! We have the very best in Bethlehem. It's aged a full 40 days, unlike some merchants across town who only aged their wine 20 days. We also have wine made from pomegranates, dates, and apples. And we never put our new wine in old wineskins. Will you stay and partake of some refreshments?

Guide: We still have a good way to go on our journey.... perhaps some other time.

Guide: (moving to the fish booth)

Fish Seller: (towards the approaching Guide) FISH FOR SALE, FRESH FISH!!

Guide: How much for these fish?

Fish Seller: These smoked fish are four mites, or we have salted fish for only three mites.

Guide: Where did these fish come from?

Fish Seller: My brother James brought them here from the Sea of Galilee.

Guide: The scriptures tell us that when the Messiah comes, He will be a fisher of men. **(turning to the fish sellers)** Please save one of your fish for me. I'll be back later to get it. What a treat this will be for my family and our guests! **(ref: is Jeremiah 16:16)**

Guide (moving towards the Salt Sellers)

Guide: Shalom

Salt Seller: Shalom, we have fine salt for sale. Salt is used as a preservative and for seasoning (**pointing to one grade of salt**), but more importantly, it is used for sacrifice and temple worship. (**Lifting the bowl of salt up towards the Guide, Guide reaches to touch salt with their fingers**) NO NO NO don't touch, don't defile! That's my very best salt for temple worship. This salt comes from the Phoenician coast where the very *best* salt is mined.

Guide: I'm sure we will see how precious it is when she tells us the price. How much is this fine salt?

Salt Seller: Only a Denarius.

Guide: (scoffing) Only one denarius!? A full day's wages for a small amount of salt!? We can only hope that God will bless us without the Phoenician salt!

Guide: (moving to bread) Here is the city oven. While the women grind their grain and bake bread, they also have a chance to catch up on local gossip. Just smelling the aroma makes me want to stop and eat a piece.

Bread Baker: We make different kinds of bread. Today we are grinding wheat, barley, and millet. Everyone is involved in growing and harvesting the grain.

Guide: Your oven looks very busy.

Bread Baker: The oven stays busy all the time since each person eats about three loaves a day. Bread is our main food and very important to our daily lives.

Guide: Bread is important, but not nearly as important as the Word of God. We should also feed regularly upon God's Word, the bread of life.

Guide: (turning towards the Synagogue) Here is the city's synagogue. The synagogue does not replace or imitate the functions of the holy temple in Jerusalem. There are no priests or sacrifices offered here. It is the focus of the Jewish community activity in the city. It is a religious center, meeting hall, courtroom, and school.

In this first section we see the school. Boys come here to study from daylight until mid-day to learn the Torah, which is the first 5 books of what you might call the Old Testament. The boys learn by listening to the teacher and repeating aloud after him. By the age of 10 most boys will have memorized all 5 of those books.

(moving to the middle section of the Synagogue) In this center section, we find some of the town elders and the men discussing community issues, or questions about the Scriptures. Let's ask them if the scriptures say anything about a Messiah's birth.

Elder: The Scriptures teach many things about the Messiah. The prophet Isaiah says that only the Messiah can take away the sins of the world. Isaiah said, "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." When the Messiah comes, he will bring peace with God to those who follow Him. The Prophet Micah tells us that in the little town of Bethlehem among the clans of Judah, one will go forth for God to be the ruler in Israel.

Guide: This town of Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of the Messiah. Would you pray a blessing over us as we continue our long journey?

Elder: May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Guide: (moving towards the last section of the Synagogue/Scribe) In this last section, you can see a scribe making a copy of the Torah. He writes on parchment made of treated skins of sheep or goats or any other animal. There is one separate scroll for each book of the Torah. The ink is a diluted mixture of lamp black and gum. The pen is a reed split at the end to form a nib. The word of God is perfect and without error, so if the scribe makes any error while he is writing the book, the entire book must be destroyed, and he must start over. No corrections, or errors are allowed. Because of this standard of perfection, we know that the scriptures we have now are unaltered and perfect as God intended.

Guide: (moving to the Jewish Home) This is the home of Andrew and Miriam. Our homes in Bethlehem are very small. You see we keep our animals indoors on the lower level. They are very valuable to us. The family eats and sleeps above on the platform area. **(turning to the parents)** Things look very busy here.

Home Parent: It's hard to keep the children working with so much excitement in town.

Guide: Is that a flute your child is making?

Home Parent or Child: Yes, from a reed they got found in the creek that runs down to the Jordan River.

Guide: Perhaps we will hear them playing in the marketplace later?

Home Parent: Perhaps. Have you heard about the baby that was born in the stables? I know you study the scriptures. Could this possibly be the Messiah?

Guide: The Prophet Micah said that a child, the son of God, would be born in the city of David.

Home Parent: Could our prayers really be answered? Could this be the promised Messiah humbling himself by being born in a stable instead of in a king's palace?

Guide: We can only pray that this prophecy HAS been fulfilled. Thank you for allowing us to visit with you.

Guide: (moving to the Inn, speaking to the Inn Keeper) Do you have room for these travelers? They have come a long way.

Inn Keeper: Look around you. Do you think we would have room with the census going on? My own children are sleeping on the roof. I'm sorry, but we have no more room here at the Inn.

Inn Keeper's Wife: Yes, last night he sent a couple to the stable, and she was heavy with child.

Inn Keeper: Maybe you can find some room to sleep in the stable, too.

Guide: I hope you are not charging to sleep in the stable.

Inn Keeper: No, no. It's out of the goodness of my heart.

Guide: (moving towards the Well) Here is the city's well where women come to gather water every day. Many of the ladies also come here to keep up with the daily news. This woman always seems to be in the know and as you can see, she is very friendly with the Roman soldiers.

Woman at the Well: Are you talking about me? At least I know what is going on. That's why you always come to me when you need information.

Guide: (sarcastically) Yes, yes and you are *always* happy to oblige. **(Turning serious)** Tell us what you have heard about the baby.

Woman at the Well: Well, His parents are ordinary people, but I heard that He is the promised Messiah, and His mother is a virgin.

Guide: If this is true, this could be the virgin birth that Isaiah prophesied over 700 years ago. Could this be that our Savior has been born in Bethlehem? Perhaps God will reveal this to us in time.

Roman Soldier: Are you bothering this woman!? Move on!

Guide: We'd better move on...quickly.

Guide: (moving to the Metal Workers) My, Ruth, you look very busy today.

Metal Worker Ruth: We've had more business during these registration days than ever before. John is busy working on special orders from some of the travelers.

Metal Worker John: I have been working from sunup to sundown trying to keep up with all these orders. It's hard with so many orders coming at one time.

Guide: What a beautiful serving platter! I only wish someday to have the money to purchase one of these. But I'm afraid after these taxes that will have to wait.

Metal Worker Ruth: Don't worry, John can always make you a beautiful serving platter.

Guide: John, we won't keep you from your work.

Guide: (moving to the Carpenter booth) Nathan, what are you working on here in the carpenter shop?

Carpenter: (carving a block of wood) There is always work for a carpenter making tools, farm implements, and furniture. Today I am making a chest.

Guide: (picks up and smells some of the cedar shavings) Ah!! Cedar wood from Lebanon. You can always tell a carpenter by the cedar chip behind his ear - it's the mark of his trade. **(turning to the Carpenter)** Have you heard anything about a family having a baby born to them in the stables?

Carpenter: Yes, not only have I heard about this, yesterday the family stopped by here looking for the stable, and the father is a carpenter from Nazareth.

Guide: I guess it's true what we have been hearing.

Guide: (moving to the Cloth Weavers) These are the cloth weavers. What pretty cloth you have here!

Cloth Weaver: We are very proud of our products, especially our woolen product. We buy our wool from the shepherds over on the hillside. This morning they told a strange story about an angel who spoke to them and declared that the Savior has been born in a manger in the city of David.

Guide: We have heard rumors all about the town. And you say these shepherds are on the hillside?

Cloth Weaver: Yes, they are.

Guide: Let us journey along. Perhaps we will be able to find one of the shepherds and he can tell us where the Christ child is.

Guide: (moving to the Cloth Dyers) I see you are dyeing purple today. It must be a special occasion!

Cloth Dyer: My dye comes from many sources, but this purple comes from the precious murex shell and is very costly. We also dye this yellow from saffron and ground pomegranates, and this red from madder plants.

Guide: If the rumors about the Messiah are true, you will want to save some of your purple cloth for Him.

Cloth Dyer: Ha! I heard that story too, but I'm dyeing my purple cloth for a KING, not for some baby.

Guide: Perhaps this baby will be your King?

Guide (moving to Potter) The potters are usually near the edge of town because they need room to dispose of their broken clay scraps. The pieces of clay get mired into the soil and unfortunately this makes the land unusable ... but cheap to buy. That is why the cheap land on the edge of town is referred to as a potter's field.

Clay Potter: Can we interest you in some pottery? We have cooking and food storage containers made from the red clay of the Jordan River Valley.

Guide: (picking up pieces of broken pottery) Well, what happened to these?

Clay Potter: The soldiers were by earlier and broke these. We are at their mercy. But we still have several nice pieces for sale.

Guide: These are very nice, and I see you are very talented, but we are not in the market for any today. And I do hope the Roman soldiers don't break anymore. You know, when I think of the potter and the clay, I think of what the Lord says through Isaiah - that God, Himself, is the potter and will mold us and shape our lives for his glory. **(ref: Isaiah 64:8)**

Guide: (moving to the Shepherds' field) Are you the shepherds the angel appeared to last night?

Shepherd 1: Yes, an angel of the Lord came upon us, and the glory of the Lord shone round about us, and we were very afraid.

Shepherd 2: But the angel said unto us, "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you was born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Shepherd 3: And then the angel said, "This shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger."

Guide: Did you find the babe, the Savior who is Christ the Lord?

Shepherd 1: Yes, just down the way in the stable.

Guide: (to the group) Then perhaps we will find him there also. **(Turning from the Shepherds)**

Guide: (arriving at the donkey) This is the Abyssinian donkey. You may be familiar with the story, but tradition says that this is the same species of donkey Mary rode into Bethlehem when she was heavy with child. And that this is the same type of donkey that Jesus rode into Jerusalem just before his crucifixion. As a result, tradition says that God has blessed this donkey with the mark of the cross as a reward for its service to the Lord Jesus Christ. **(Motion to show the shape of the cross down the donkey's back)** Can you see the cross?

Guide: (moving to the Manger) It's true. Jesus Christ our Savior has come. The Christ child has been born in Bethlehem, as the Prophet Micah foretold. As the Prophet Isaiah foretold, he was born of a virgin - The Scriptures have been fulfilled!

Guide: (walking away from the Manger) All of the world will know that the Messiah, the Savior, has been born.

Guide: (move to the Wise Men)

Wise Men: We have traveled a great distance. Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him

Guide: Just over the hill at the edge of the town of Bethlehem. You will find Him lying in a manger.

Wise Man 1: Behold, the star goes before us. We rejoice and are exceedingly joyful that we have found the Savior. **(displaying gold)** We have gifts of gold.

Wise Man 2: (displaying frankincense) And Frankincense

Wise Man 3: And Myrrh

Guide: Truly these are gifts fit for a King. I'm sure this is the child you seek.

Guide: (moving around the corner before the Cross and Gathering Group) - The birth of Jesus is just the start of our story. Jesus grew up living a perfect life, and in his early 30s He began His ministry traveling around Judea. Jesus taught

about God and started performing miracles; He made blind men see, made lame men walk, cured diseases, and even raised people from the dead. However, this was not His greatest miracle.

Guide: (moving to Calvary Cross) Did you know that God loved you so much that He set aside some of His Godly powers to take human form? He became a baby, a person, so that He could die on the cross for you. The Bible tells us that we are all sinners and that the penalty for sin is death. Jesus, after living a perfect life, died on the cross for you. If you will accept this free gift and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you too, will have eternal life. But that is not the end of our story about the Messiah!!! **(This links the Cross to the Tomb).**

Guide: (moving to the Tomb) Jesus' body was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb. An armed guard was placed there to protect the tomb, but on the third day the tomb was empty, and Jesus had resurrected - showing He was God and victorious over sin, Satan, and death.

Many of us celebrate Christmas by giving and receiving gifts. God's gift to the world was His Own Son living a perfect life and dying on the cross for our sins, that we might receive the gift of eternal life.

The gift is free to all who will accept it. We cannot earn eternal life by doing good works because even one sin mixed in with all our good deeds is enough to keep us out of heaven. You see, God is holy and perfect, and can't be in the presence of sin. That is why Jesus came to pay for our sins and offer the free gift of eternal life to all who believe in Him.

If you have not received this gift already, you can receive it by simple child-like faith. Many of us express this faith through a prayer. I will lead us in this prayer of faith if you would like to receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior tonight. Others might desire to rededicate their life to live for the Lord.

Please join with me in this prayer silently: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for loving me and sending Your Son to die on the cross for my sins and raising Him from the grave. Please come into my life and make me the Christian I should be. Thank You for hearing my prayer and helping me to dedicate my life to my Lord and Savior. In His Name I pray, Amen.

It was a pleasure for me to be your guide and we are glad that you traveled with us through Bethlehem. We hope that this will help you in having a truly Christ-centered Christmas. We would like you to help us by filling out as much as you would like on this response card. There are tables and pencils right out this door. If you prayed this prayer to receive Christ tonight and you would like to share this decision with one of our counselors or talk about it a little more, we would be glad to help. Please let me know, and I will introduce you to one of the counselors.