



The one tradition with which everyone agrees is being home for Christmas! Home is where our families are, where we feel loved and cared for. Home is where memories of Christmas' past are etched in our minds and hearts. Home is where we can experience all the joy, hope and love that is central to the spirit of Christmas. Yet many are without a real home this Christmas. Natural disasters have destroyed tens of thousands of homes in the devastating hurricanes of Houston, Puerto Rico and Florida, the consuming fires in California, and other disasters around the world. Terrorism has displaced millions, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, throughout the Middle East and impacting other parts of the world. And many people confront health, work and financial challenges which have altered their lives, causing some to lose their homes or be dislocated. Our active military may be stationed far from home, leaving families separated for long periods. Where is home for these this Christmas?

In contrast, my husband Ken and I have moved into a new home this Christmas. Since we do not have children, we traveled for Christmas in past years, going to winter resorts to enjoy the snow and festivities of the season. Yet our tradition when away from home was to find a local church wherever we were to celebrate Christmas eve candle light service. "Home for Christmas" in those years was joining a congregation gathered with other families to remember the true meaning of Christmas. Now in our new

"And Joseph went up from Galilee from the city of Nazareth to Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was out of the house and clan of David... And Mary delivered her son, the Firstborn, and she wrapped Him and laid Him in a manger..." Luke 2:4 - 7

home, we decked the halls throughout the whole house with decorations which had been stored for 15 years! It is a joy to share the memories and experiences of the season with friends and neighbors in our new home town of Flagstaff. We are grateful to be home for Christmas and anticipate sharing the traditions of this special season for many years to come.

While privileged to be in our new home, we think of the many who are not home for Christmas. Christ himself was not born at home, but rather in a stable on a field in Bethlehem. This was more than a coincidence caused by Herod's decree for a census, returning all Jews to their ancestral homes. Rather God ordained that His Son should be born in Bethlehem as prophesied in Micah 5:2: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

Why Bethlehem? Could it be that aside from being the "house of bread", the ancestral home of the line of David, that Bethlehem is where the sacrificial lambs for the temple were raised? Indeed, the shepherds watching the sheep were the first to receive the announcement of the angelic host on the first Christmas: *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' And it came to pass, as the angels*

were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.' Luke 2:13 - 15

Jesus was born as the final sacrificial lamb on a hill in Bethlehem over which a bright star shone, also prophesied: *"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him?'"* Matthew 2:1-2

This sacrificial lamb also was called King. The Savior of the world was not only king of the Jews, but King of the universe! God Himself sent His son Jesus born of a virgin, laid in a manger, and ultimately crucified that all people may be reconciled to Him: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* John 3:16

After Christ was crucified, He rose again and ascended unto the Father to prepare our eternal home: *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."* John 14:2 After the resurrection Jesus shared with the women in the garden: *"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."* John 20:17

Regardless of our current circumstances or where our earthly home is, it is comforting to know there is an eternal home awaiting us! The ultimate home for Christmas shall be heaven. Awaiting us are family members who have departed before us. They are

already celebrating Christmas in their heavenly home with Christ Himself. As the Chris Tomlin popular song [Home](#) rejoices, *"I'm going home where are streets are golden... I'm in your open arms where I belong.... The trump will sound, the angels will sing, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, I am going home."*

What a homecoming it shall be when we are reunited with family and friends for the great feast of the Lamb and King! *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard them saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'" Revelation 5:12 -13* Indeed, *"Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding supper of the Lamb."* Revelation 19:9

If you are displaced, have lost your home, or are separated from family and home, you can still rejoice this Christmas simply by knowing the One whom we celebrate, Jesus. When He resides in your heart, when He has made you anew in His resurrection power, you become His temple. In a sense, you are at home already through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Praise the Lord, He makes a way for each of us to experience His peace, joy, and hope now and for eternity. If you do not know His presence, then this Christmas receive Jesus as your personal Savior. Wherever you are, you indeed will be home for Christmas!

By Sheryl Dawson
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