



The young, heavily pregnant Mary is forced to leave the security of her family and home, and set out on a journey of about 85 miles with a man she is still not properly married to.

How did they travel? Paintings show her astride a donkey, but there is no mention of a donkey in Luke's Gospel. She probably walked. Would the baby be born on the way? Would any-one be around to help deliver it? Would Mary and the baby survive the ordeal? Luke never dwells on these questions, but they are real

enough concerns for millions of women then and now.

Artistic and poetic licence has invented an 'inn-keeper' who turns the couple away, but Luke does not include this.

'No room at the inn...'

Some scholars suggest that 'inn' is a poor translation from the original Greek word '*kataluma*'. Luke uses it only one other time; in the story of the Last Supper (22:11). In that story, it is usually translated as 'guest room'. Luke 10:34 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan) uses a different Greek word when he talks of the 'inn' to which the injured man is taken.

So, did Luke intend his readers to think of an inn in his Nativity story, or is he actually suggesting that the 'guest room' was unavailable to them, and therefore, the baby could not be born there?