

Bethlehem *(Beit-Lechem)*

Somepeoplelightcandles on an Advent wreath as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas. The secondcandle to be lit is the 'Bethlehem' or 'Peace' candle. When we think of Bethlehem, the location of the nativity, we remember a humble couple on an unwanted journey, at an inconvenient time, visiting a tiny insignificant town.

The location of Bethlehem (which means "house of bread") for the birth of Jesus Christ, is not only a fulfilment of prophecy given hundreds of years earlier, but a reminder once again that God loves even the insignificant of the world. God's Son was not born in a palace in a prestigious city, but in a lowly humble town, He will however return one day to rule and reign as King from Jerusalem!

Observation

Read each passage below and underline every reference to Bethlehem. List what you learn in the side margin, especially noting who or what Bethlehem is associated with or why it is significant.

Genesis 48:7

7 "Now as for me, when I *(Jacob)* came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

INSIGHT: There are 2 places called, 'Bethlehem'. Bethlehem Ephrath is 5 miles south of Jerusalem, the other one is in the north near Nazareth (Joshua 19:15). Jacob's wife Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin.

Ruth 1:22, 4:13-17

1:22 So Naomi returned,and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.
14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.
15 "May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him."
16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.
17 The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been

born to Naomi!" So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

1Samuel 17:12, 16:1, 13, 2 Samuel 7:16

17:12 Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons.

16:1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."
13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.

7:16 "Your (David) house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."

Micah 5:2-5

2 "But as for you,Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah,fromyouOne will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings fortharefromlong ago, from the days of eternity."
3 Therefore Hewillgivethem up until the time when she who is in labor has borneachild.Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sonsofIsrael.
4 And He will ariseandshepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majestyofthe name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, becauseatthat time He will be great to the ends of the earth.
5This One will be ourpeace.

INSIGHT: Micah prophesied around 733-701BC, about 300 years after King David ruled in Israel.

Luke 2:4, 11

4Joseph alsowent up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to thecityof David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the houseand family of David,
11 ... for todayinthe city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who isChrist the Lord.

Matthew 2:1-6

1Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
2"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."
3When Herod the king heard [this,] he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people,
he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been
written by the prophet:
6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS
LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU
SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE
ISRAEL.'"

John 7:40-42

40 Some of thepeople therefore, when they heard these words,
were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."
41 Others weresaying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying,
"Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?
42 "Has not theScripture said that the Christ comes from the
descendants ofDavid, and from Bethlehem, the village where David
was?"

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Interpretation

1. What are your conclusions about Bethlehem?

Application

2. If God's prophesies about a small insignificant town have come to pass with regard to Jesus' first advent or coming, how does this impact your faith with regards to unfulfilled prophecy about Jesus' second advent?

3. 2 Peter 3 talks about those who mock God's prophetic word saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?". He concludes his letter:

    - With a question **v11**, "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ..."
    - With a warning **v17**, "be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness"
    - With an instruction **v18**, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

    What is your response?

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