

WHY WAS JESUS BORN IN BETHLEHEM?

TEXT: MATTHEW 2:1-12

Introduction:

1. I love to sing the old Christmas carols, and one of my favorites is “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”
2. Bethlehem was a little town when Christ was born, and it still is today, with a population of about 30,000 people. There are more people living in Elmont than in Bethlehem.
3. Bethlehem is located about six miles southwest of Jerusalem. With all the great locations in the world to choose from, people often wonder why God choose this obscure little town for the birthplace of His only begotten Son.
4. Tonight, we will consider three good reasons.

I. TO FULFILL OT PROPHECY.

1. Seven hundred years earlier the prophet Micah wrote, “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” (Micah 5:2).
2. This past Wednesday evening, we started a new series in the book of Habakkuk, and we noted that Habakkuk refers to God being eternal.
3. “Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One?” (Habakkuk 1:12).
4. God transcends time. God is not limited by time. God “is not hampered by being locked into the succession of events as they occur” (John Phillips).
5. Eternality is one of the divine attributes of God. Only God is eternal – He had no beginning and He has no end.
6. Therefore, Jesus is God because He is eternal (Micah 5:2; John 8:58).
7. One of the reasons we use the KJV is because of its reliability and accuracy. Listen carefully to Micah 5:2 as it is found in the popular (but inaccurate) NIV translation, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

8. Saying the Messiah's "origins are from of old, from ancient times" is not the same as saying, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (King James Version).
9. The NIV and ESV and other new translations are very similar to the dangerous JW "New World Translation." "And you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, the one too little to get to be among the thousands of Judah, from you there will come out to me the one who is to become ruler in Israel, whose origin is from early times, from the days of time indefinite."
10. Micah 5:2 does not say the Messiah's origin is from early times, from the days of time indefinite," it says, "from everlasting," in other words, "from eternity."
11. Some Messianic prophecies are difficult to understand. For example, Psalm 8 is understood in the light of the NT.
12. Some prophecies are only understood after the event has occurred (cf. John 2:18-22).
13. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 and some other Messianic prophecies have perplexed readers for hundreds of years as to their meaning.
14. How could the Messiah die? The Jews were expecting the Messiah to come in great power and glory (cf. Zech. 14:1-4).
15. But along with these prophecies regarding the second coming of Christ, there were many prophecies regarding His first coming (cf. Zech. 12:10).
16. We know that many of the great Messianic prophecies are difficult to interpret. However, Micah 5:2 is not difficult at all. God wanted the world to know the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (cf. Matthew 2:1-6).

II. TO IDENTIFY WITH KING DAVID

1. Way back in II Samuel 7 (over 1000 years before Christ), it was revealed that the Messiah would come from the lineage of King David.
2. God told David, "I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Sam. 7:13).
3. Prior to this revelation, it was prophesied that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and from the tribe of Judah.
4. Then the Lord revealed that the Messiah would come through the seed of David (cf. Matt. 1:1).
5. The Bible teaches that the Messiah would be a Son of David and sit on the throne of David. Old Testament prophecies emphasized this again and again.

6. Psalm 89:35, 36 says, “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”
7. Mary and Joseph were both descended from King David.
8. God used a heathen emperor, Caesar Augustus, to fulfill His will. Luke 2:1 tells us that when Caesar’s census called everyone to his ancestral home, Joseph and Mary made the journey south from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7).
9. Going back to II Samuel 5:7, Jerusalem is referred to as “the city of David,” and it is called that many times in the OT.
10. But twice in Luke 2, Bethlehem is referred to as the city of David. Luke 2:4 says, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David).”
11. And then in Luke 2:11, the angel said to the shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”
12. Our Lord is referred to as “the son of David 16 times in the NT. The Syrophenician woman said to Jesus, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil” (Matt. 15:22).
13. This pagan Syrophenician woman recognized Jesus as “the Son of David.” She had great faith, and our Lord commended her, and said to her, “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”
14. And we’re told, “And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matthew 15:28).

III. BETHLEHEM MEANS “HOUSE OF BREAD.”

1. Bethlehem in the Hebrew means “House of Bread.”
2. This is very significant, because Jesus said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).
3. Isaiah asked, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isa. 55:2).
4. In other words, why are you working and worrying and spending your life for things that do not nourish you, do not strengthen you, and do not satisfy you?
5. We need to consider Isaiah’s words today.
 - Why do people spend hours out in the cold night waiting to get into a store at 5 AM?
 - Why do they trample a man to death to save a few dollars on some piece of junk they don’t even need?

- Why do they spend more time shopping than praying and reading the Bible?
- Why do they live for the vain things of this world? These things can never satisfy the soul.
- Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecies given hundreds of years earlier. Jesus Christ is the Son of David, born in the City of David. Jesus is the Bread of Life, born in the House of Bread.

CONCLUSION:

1. I began my message tonight by referring to the great Christmas carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”
2. The song was written by an American preacher named Phillips Brooks, who wrote it in 1865 after visiting Bethlehem.
3. There is an interesting old story about a time when Phillips Brooks was recovering from a serious illness, and he was denying himself visitors.
4. Robert Ingersoll, the famous atheist came to his house to visit him, and said, “I appreciate this very much, but why do you see me when you deny yourself to your friends?”
5. “It is this way,” said Phillips Brooks, “I feel confident of seeing my friends in heaven, but this may be my last chance of seeing you.”