

The Little Town of Bethlehem



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- Bethlehem - Arabic: Bayt Lahm “House of Meat”; Hebrew: Bet Lehem “House of Bread”; Koine Greek: Βηθλεέμ Beth le em.
- Bethlehem is a Palestinian city located in the central West Bank, neighbor to south Jerusalem, with a population of 25,000 people
- It is part of the Governorate of the Palestinian Authority. The economy today is primarily tourism.
- The Bible identifies Bethlehem as the city of David. The New Testament identifies Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus

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- Canaanite period - A historical reference to the town appears in the Amarna Letters (1400 BC) when Abdi-Heba, the local governor of Jerusalem during the Amarna period, appeals to the Pharaoh of Egypt, for help in retaking "Bit-Lahmi" in the wake of disturbances by the Apiru.
- Center of worship for Lachmo, the Akkadian god of fertility. The town was known as Beit Lachama, meaning "House of Lachama."
- William F. Albright notes that the pronunciation of the name remained essentially the same for 3,500 years, but has meant different things: 'Temple of the God Lakhmu' in Canaanite, 'House of Bread' in Hebrew and Aramaic, 'House of Meat' in Arabic."

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- Israelite and Judean period: Original name was Ephrath, meaning fertile or fruitful place - Micah 5:2
- Was where Rachel was buried - Gen. 48:7
- Was Naomi's home town and where Ruth gleaned grain in the fields of Boaz - Ruth 1:1-2, 2:4-10
- Was where Samuel went to anoint David of the house of Jesse to be king - 1Sam. 16:1
- Was where the Philistines had a fort and three of David's best warriors went to get water from the well right next to the gate. David would not drink it, but gave it to God instead - 2Sam. 23:13-17

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- Was the site of Jesus' advent into this world - Matt. 2:1
- Justin Martyr, who stated in his Dialogue with Trypho (155–161 AD) that the family had taken refuge in a cave outside of the town used to pen animals at night.
- Origen of Alexandria in 247, referred to a cave in the town of Bethlehem which local people used to shelter livestock at night from wild animals, as the birthplace of Jesus.
- Is believed to be the place where Ezekiel, Asaph, Job, and Jesse were buried (4th century; Pilgrim of Bordeaux)

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- The town stands at an elevation of about a half mile above sea level, 100 feet higher than Jerusalem.
- It is 45 miles northeast of the Mediterranean Sea and 6 miles south of Jerusalem.

Little Town, World Changing Event

- He who enjoyed the glory and power of heaven, became poor and humble in an animal shelter in a small country town
 - 2Cor. 8:9 - “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”
 - Micah 5:2 - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- Why did Jesus come to this world?
- Why would He willingly leave Heaven with all its glory to live in this sin burdened world?
- Why would He die for people who cared nothing for Him?

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To reveal the invisible God
 - John 1:18 - “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”
 - John 14:9 - “Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To fulfill prophecy
 - Gen. 3:15 - “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To be a sacrifice for our sins
 - Heb. 2:9 - “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”
 - Heb. 10:4-5, 10-12
 - Mark 10:45 - “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To re-unite man and God
 - 2Cor. 5:19 - “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”
 - 1Tim. 2:5-6 - “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To provide an example for believers
 - 1Peter 2:21 - “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps”
 - 1John 2:6 - “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To provide believers with a high priest
 - Heb. 2:17 - “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”
 - Heb. 3:1 - “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus”
 - Heb. 4:14 - “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To destroy the Adversary and his works
 - Heb. 2:14 - “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil”
 - 1John 3:8 - “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To undo the human predicament
 - Rom. 5:12 - “herefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”
 - 1Cor. 15:21 - “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To heal the broken hearted
 - Luke 4:18-21 - “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. 20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To give abundant, fulfilling life
 - John 10:10 - “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To glorify the Father
 - John 13:31 - “Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”
 - John 17:4 - “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

Little Town, World Changing Event

- To comfort us as we travel toward Heaven
 - Heb. 4:15-16 - “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

What Saith The Word?

- Isa. 7:14 - “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”
- 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.”

What Saith The Word?

- Luke 2:1-14 - “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 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: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

What Saith The Word?

- Luke 2:1-14 - “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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.”

What Saith The Word?

- Matt. 2:1 - “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”
- Luke 2:16 - “And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”
- Matt. 2:11 - “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

What Saith The Word?

- Matt. 2:16 - “Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.”
- John 7:42 - “Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”

What Saith The Word?

- In the final analysis, Jesus came to Bethlehem as a baby because He loved us and wanted to give His life a ransom for our sins. He came to our home for a short time so that we can go to His home forever
 - John 14:1-3 - “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”