

The Significance of Christ

In our Christmas lesson on Sunday (12/1/13), we studied “O Little town of Bethlehem” taken from (Micah 5:1-5) and (Matt.2:1-12).

TWO FOCUS VERSES:

(Micah 5:2) “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, **too little to among the clan of Judah**, from you One will go forth for Me to be Ruler of Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

(Matt.2:6) “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.”

DOCTRINAL POINT:

God kept Bethlehem insignificant for 700 years after Micah’s prophecy in order to fulfill its prophetic role in the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ. This was to teach us that Bethlehem’s significance was in Christ both prophetically and historically as is ours (1 Cor.10:11, 18).

What I find interesting is that God kept Bethlehem’s insignificance in existence even before Micah’s prophecy in 8th century BC.

Today’s lesson will study five historical aspects of the insignificance of Bethlehem from its beginning in Bible until the birth of Jesus Christ.

1. First Scriptural mention of Bethlehem was the burial site of Rachel in 21st century BC.

Rachel died travelling between Bethel and Bethlehem and died giving birth to Benjamin. (Gen.35:16-20). Think of Mary travelling a greater distance.

(Gen.35:19) “So Rachel died and was buried on the way to **Ephrath** (that is Bethlehem).”

On his death bed, Jacob reminds Joseph of this story of the death of his mother Rachel–

(Gen.48:7) “Now as for me, when I 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).”

Jacob put a head stone in honor of his beloved Rachel at the burial site (Gen.35:20).

2. Second Scriptural mention of Bethlehem was distribution of the land to the tribe of Judah in 15th century BC.

Bethlehem belonged to the hill country of Judah (Josh.15:48-60). This is why Matthew called it **Bethlehem of Judah** (Matt.2:6).

The Septuagint records it as a village of this hill country in Josh.15:60 (Ephrath / that is Bethlehem).

3. Third mention of Bethlehem was how it became the property of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar by Levirate marriage (Deut.25:5-10; 1 Chron.2:3-4; both Tamar and Ruth; Matt.1:3, 5).

- **Perez** was the legal heir by Levirate marriage between Judah and Tamar (Gen.38:11-30) in 21st century BC.
- **Perez** became the legal heir of the messianic Davidic lineage to Jesus Christ (Matt.1:1-6) as well as to Bethlehem (Matt.2:6).

4. Fourth Scriptural mention of Bethlehem was an insignificant descendant of Perez called Caleb (1 Chron.2:5, 18).

- Caleb was the son of Hezron; but was not in the lineage of Christ (Matt.1:3-6) (Perez, Hezron, Ram).
- Caleb remarried a woman named Ephrath; and they had a son named Hur (1 Chron.2:18-19).

The village of Ephrath became Caleb's by drowry when he married Ephrath. I was told that the villages of Remlap and Palmerdale were named after two brothers. Remlap is Palmer spelled backwards.

- Caleb and Ephrath's son, Hur, became the heir to it. That is why it Hur is called the firstborn of Ephrathah and the father of Bethlehem (1 Chron.2:50; 4:3b).

The firstborn of Perez, Hezron (1 Chron.2:5), was buried at Caleb-ephrathah – “After the death of Hezron in Caleb-ephathah.”(1 Chron. 2:24a)

5. There are three doctrinal principles to take way from this of this lesson.

- **First doctrinal principle:** God is in absolute control of redemptive history (Phil.4:19).
- **Second doctrinal principle:** God takes care of details of life so that we can focus on our walk of faith (Matt.6:25-34; James 4:13-17; 2 Cor.5:7).
- **Third doctrinal principle:** “There are no insignificant people or places or events or activities in Christ Jesus in the eternal plan of God.”

We have studied how God controlled important details of the lives of believers associated with redemptive history:

- from the **21st century BC** (Jacob and Rachel)
- to the **15th century BC** (Judah / Perez and Caleb)
- to the **8th century BC** (Micah / Bethlehem)
- to the **1st century BC** (Mary and Joseph / birth of Jesus Christ)
- **and to the 21st century AD** (DSBC / and us)

All according to the eternal plan of God (**Eph.1:11**).

MERRY CHRISTMAS

“**And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth for Me in Israel a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.**”

“**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**” (Eph.2:10)