

Bethlehem Basics

Wednesday, 12/5 – 11 AM & 7 PM

First Wednesday in Advent – 2018

During Advent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Since our church is named Bethlehem, this sermon is the *first of five* in what I am calling *The Bethlehem Series*.

When we hear the word “Bethlehem”, we automatically think about ♦the place of Jesus’ birth and ♦the name of our congregation; *this series will also answer these questions:*

- a. How many times does *Bethlehem* appear in the Bible?
- b. What is the meaning of the word *Bethlehem*?
- c. What is the first mention of *Bethlehem* in the Bible?
- d. What are the various names used for *Bethlehem*?
- e. What can be said about modern day *Bethlehem*?
- f. How does *Bethlehem* play a number of important roles in connection with the book of Ruth?
- g. Why is David connected to *Bethlehem*?
- h. What does the Bible say about the Messiah being born in *Bethlehem*?
- i. How did God use Caesar Augustus to fulfill the prophecy of the Savior being born in *Bethlehem*?
- j. How are Joseph and Mary connected to *Bethlehem*?
- k. How should we be like the shepherds who heard of the Savior’s birth in *Bethlehem*?

1. **Bible Appearances:** The word “Bethlehem” appears 49 times in the Bible:

a. 43 of those refer to the famous Bethlehem in the land given to the tribe of Judah –
♦ *located in the southern part of the country and ♦ six miles southwest of Jerusalem.*

b. 5 of those refer to a man named Bethlehem.

c. 1 is a reference to another Bethlehem in the land given to the tribe of Zebulun ([Joshua 19:15](#)); it’s now in ruins, *but it was located ♦ in the northern part of the country and ♦ six miles northwest of Nazareth.*



2. **Meaning:** Let’s break down the word: “beth” means house and “lehem” means bread, so Bethlehem means “house of bread.” It’s interesting that Jesus, *who is the Bread of Life* ([John 6:35](#)), was born in the *House of Bread!* Furthermore, as we need *bread for our bodies*, so we need *Jesus for our souls!* He is the way, the truth, and the life; *He is the only way to heaven!*

3. **First Mentioned:** Bethlehem is first mentioned in the Bible as the place near where Rachel died: ^{ESV} **Genesis 35:19-20** “So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel’s tomb, which is there to this day.” // Who was Rachel? Let’s go back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:
- Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac.
 - Isaac and Rebekah had two sons, Esau and Jacob.
 - Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, *but was tricked into marrying her older sister Leah first*; then he also married Rachel. Jacob was the father of 12 sons and 1 daughter; Jacob was a.k.a. Israel; *in time his descendants became the nation of Israel.*
4. **Various Names:** In the Bible, Bethlehem is called “Ephrath” (Genesis 35:16), “Bethlehem Ephratah” (Micah 5:2), “Bethlehem in Judah” (1 Samuel 17:12) – *to distinguish it from the other Bethlehem location*, and “the city of David” (Luke 2:4).
5. **Occupied by the Enemy:** At the time of Jacob, *Bethlehem was controlled by the Canaanites*; then, *after the time in the wilderness*, Joshua led the conquest of the Promised Land, which was basically divided among the 12 tribes – *with Judah receiving the territory that included Bethlehem*. However, about 400 years later, the Bible tells us that “the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. [Nevertheless, the Bible says that David still longed] **to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!**” (2 Samuel 23:14 ESV).

6. **Bethlehem Today** (Wikipedia):

- a. Bethlehem is a Palestinian city located in the central West Bank. Its population is approximately 25,000 people.
- b. Bethlehem now has a Muslim majority, but is still home to a significant Palestinian Christian community. Bethlehem's chief economic sector is tourism, which peaks during the Christmas season when Christians make pilgrimage to the Church of the Nativity... Bethlehem has over 30 hotels and 300 handicraft workshops. Rachel's Tomb... is located at the northern entrance of Bethlehem.
- c. Bethlehem has a Mediterranean climate, with hot and dry summers and mild, wet winters.... January is the coldest month, with temperatures ranging from 33–55 °F.... August is the hottest month, with a high of 86 °F.

7. **Summary:** Many questions are left to answer, so please plan to join us 📍 on the next two Wednesdays; then also 📍 on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day *for the rest of the Bethlehem Series!* Of course, **the most important Bethlehem connection is Jesus, who is the Christ and took away our sins!**

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, thank You for Your great kindness to make us Your own through Jesus' finished work!

Some of the contents of this sermon came from this site:

<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2001/20010514.htm>

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Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230