

## Bethlehem – 12.17.17

Christmas According to Luke Series

Today's passage: **Luke 2:1-7**

**Luke 2:1-7** (NIV) *In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register. <sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

By Joseph **OBEYING** the law to Augustus to be counted in the census, Joseph fulfilled the prophecy of Micah spoken 700 hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

- **Micah 5:2** (NIV) *"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."*
- God wasn't going to let this prophecy to be a coincidence, so He specifically named the exact location.

Yet, the greatest question is, "Why Bethlehem? Why not Rome? Why not Jerusalem?"

- Instead God chose a Bethlehem, a village about six miles south of Jerusalem.
- Bethlehem was little both in size and in significance.
- **The only two things Bethlehem was well known for** was that it was **SMALL**, and that it was the **BIRTHPLACE** of David, Israel's greatest king.
- Bethlehem was never a great or influential city.
- A town so small that it was not even mentioned in the list of more than 100 towns of Judah in **Joshua 15:21-63**.
- A town so small that when Phillips Brooks visited Bethlehem in 1865, he walked away and coined the familiar Christmas Carol, "**O Little Town of Bethlehem**".

In fact, Bethlehem's significance is primarily in its **INSIGNIFICANCE**.

- **Isn't it just like God that** the most insignificant place would bring forth the most **SIGNIFICANT** person?
- And if God were sending a savior to earth, wouldn't you think He would want everyone to know about the birth?
- Yet the Bible says that even when they got to Bethlehem, there was no room for them in the inn.

Jesus was born in a **HUMBLE** way, every way possible as helpless baby, in one of the humblest towns in the world, Bethlehem.

- To make matters worse, when Jesus was about to be born, his family had no room for Him so He was born in the lower, humble place of the home.
- Then, instead of announcing it to everyone, God chose **humble shepherds** to visit Him in the manger.
- Yet, when Jesus came to earth, no one seemed to notice or care.
- **Jesus was willing to be IGNORED.**

When Jesus came to earth, He didn't come to receive praise and honor.

- **John 1:11** (NIV) <sup>10</sup> *He (Jesus) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. <sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*
- The Bible says in **Philippians 2** that Jesus came to die.
- **Philippians 2:6-8** (NIV) *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

To all of us, Bethlehem is a just place, but to God, Bethlehem was a **PLAN**.

- **A glorious plan to save humanity from themselves.**
- **God started to reveal the plan long time ago when He saved** His people from bondage in Egypt through the blood of a Lamb (see **Exodus 12**) and when He made the sacrificial requirements all lead to Christ. But when God revealed Bethlehem, He revealed that it was in His plan for God to become like us, incarnate, to live like us and to lead us and to die for us to free us from our sins.

Bethlehem means "**House of BREAD**".

- Bread is what people most of the world depends upon to just survive.
- But when Jesus came, Bethlehem fulfilled its name and became the birthplace of the Bread of Life. (see **John 6:35**)
- **John 6:35** (NIV) Jesus declared: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*
- Jesus' birth was the beginning of a radical change God wanted to bring about in our lives.

Why Bethlehem? Because God is prone to choose the obscure, the insignificant, the lowly, the common, the unnoticed as the very instruments that He can display His power and His glory.

- **1 Corinthians 1:27-28** (NIV) <sup>27</sup> *But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,*
- **What we might think as insignificant, God sees as a PLAN.**

If God could use an insignificant small town like Bethlehem, I want you to know that He can use anything, **EVEN YOU!**

- Stop thinking that you have to be someone special for God to use you.
- There is no place and no person who is insignificant to God, no one too good that they do not need to be forgiven, no one too bad that they cannot be either.
- All we have to do is **HUMBLE** ourselves enough for God to use us.
- **Today, you might not see the full picture to all the pieces in your life.**
- **Trust Him and each day, put one PIECE together.**
- God has a better plan for you than you do.