

“That last song in itself should be the message for the holiday. The people know they're not alone.

Because if you are, nature itself tells us that there are predators in nature and in life.

And they operate by separating the weakest members from the herd or from the flock.

And they are the prey.

But I've watched some of these documentaries, and when the predator attacks, the flock will come back to defend, to intercede on behalf of that weakling.

To let them know they are not alone.

They are not alone.

In this Christmas season, let's make sure they know they are not alone.

Now, when I read the Bible, and I would encourage you to do the same thing, when I read things, I try to ask questions of myself, which makes me dig a little deeper. And the question I'm asking this morning, well, let me give you a script to read first.

You're going to hear a lot of Luke chapter 2 for the next probably a couple of three weeks.

That's where the Christmas story is found, Luke and Matthew. But let me read this, and I'll tell you about my question”

“Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse number 1. Since it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Sirenius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, under the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because it was the house and lineage of David. To be taxed was to marry his spouse life, being great with child.

And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished, and he 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 end. In those seven verses, I can preach for a month.

If you dig deep enough, there's so much in there, but I'm not going to do that.

But my question, why Bethlehem?

Well, Eddie, you just read it.

It's because he was of the house and lineage of David.”

“Okay, why was he of the house and lineage of David?

I mean, why?

When you read the Word of God, you need to ask why, because there are things that are deeper in there that you need to know.

And I'm going to try to share a little bit of that with you this morning. But first, I want to read you something that I found.

I've shared this a long time ago, but it always amuses me because of how it is.

You know, we live in a world where there are a lot of prejudice, you know, against different things, different people. Prejudice against Jewish people.

It's called semitism.

And this is a little bit of that, but this is something that took back years and years ago.

Okay, so you listen to the story.

A Jewish lady named Mrs. Rosenberg, who many years ago was stranded late one night at a fashionable resort.

One that did not admit Jews.

The desk clerk looked down at his book and said, sorry, no room.

The hotel is full.

The Jewish lady said, but your sign says that you have vacancies.”

“The desk clerk stammered and then said, certainly, you know that we do not admit Jews. Now, you go try the other side of town, and maybe you'll have better luck there.

Mrs. Rosenberg fits in noticeably and said, I'll have you know, I converted to your religion.

The desk clerk said, oh yeah?

Well, let me give you a little test.

How was Jesus born?

Mrs. Rosenberg replied, he was born to a virgin named Mary in a little town called Bethlehem.

Very good, replied the clerk.

Tell me more.

Mrs. Rosenberg replied, he was born in a manger.

That's right, said the hotel clerk.

And why was he born in a manger? Mrs. Rosenberg replied sternly, because a jerk like you in a hotel wouldn't give a Jewish lady a room for a night.

Truth in that.

There is truth in that.

But even in that, why Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus?

I mean, there are so many other more notable places in the Bible.

I mean, why not in the area of Hebron?"

"Do you know that Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and later David were all associated with the area of Hebron? I mean, these are the big hitters of the Old Testament. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and David himself.

You know, why not Nazareth?

After all, that was where Joseph and Mary lived.

That's where they were at.

It would have been convenient. It would have been handy. It would have saved them a long, hard journey with a wife who was ready to deliver at any moment.

And life could have just went on as normal.

I mean, that makes more sense, obviously.

An even bigger question, why not Jerusalem?

Why not the Holy City?

Let me tell you something about Jerusalem. And if you have not highlighted this in your Bible, you need to, because this is huge. 2 Chronicles 6, reading verses 5 and 6, it says, This is the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt.

God is speaking here.

This is the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt.

That's the children of Israel."

"I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there. Neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people. But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there.

And I have chosen David to be over my people's Isles. Jerusalem was the only place God chose to put His name.

What a perfect place to have Jesus born. I mean, Jerusalem is mentioned in the Old Testament 611 times, for goodness sake.

Everybody knows about it.

It is the religious and worship center of the entire Jewish nation.

Solomon's Second Temple was built in Jerusalem. We're not there.

You don't know either, huh?

Well, let's see if we can figure it out.

Let's see if we can figure out why.

Micah chapter 5 verse 2 tells us this.

This verse says, But thou Bethlehem, Ephrathah, thou shalt, though thou be little amongst the thousands of Jews, yet out of thee shall he come, he. Out of thee shall he come forth. Unto me, that is to be the ruler in Israel, whose going forth have been from old, from everlasting.”

“Now, up until the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem, because he was born in Bethlehem, okay? There were only two notable things happened in the entire history of that area. And that area goes all the way back to Genesis, and I'm going to show you that in a minute.

There were two notable things that ever happened, okay?

King David was born and grew up in the area of Bethlehem, and before David, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law Ruth left there because of a famine. For hundreds of years, people had come and gone out of Bethlehem with absolutely no expectation of anything or any sense that Bethlehem would ever amount to anything, okay? And most of those people missed the biggest thing to ever happen in Bethlehem.

I've shared with you over and over, words in this Bible have meaning, because this Bible was originally not written in English. It was written in Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. So, that verse I read to you out of Micah talked about Bethlehem Ephrathah.

That word, Ephrathah, means something.

It goes all the way back to Genesis 35.”

“It's mentioned there. And I want to tell you just a, I want to read it back there.

It's not Ephrathah there, it's Ephrath.

That word translates to mean two things. One being ashes, another being the place of fruitfulness. Now, how in the world do those two things go together?

Well, if you look in the book of Isaiah, chapter 61, verses one, two, and three, especially verse number three, there's a line in there that says, beauty from ashes, or beauty for ashes. This meaning of this, this word, this meaning, all the way back in Genesis, begins to lay the groundwork for Bethlehem. Even though it had amount to nothing, God has prophesied even back then, when Jacob's name was changed to Israel, when his wife died there, it was at the area of Bethlehem.

And in that scripture, and I, as much as I want to chase this rabbit, I am not going to. Wednesday night, we had a wonderful discussion. We had a little quiz that was just for fun, and we talked about Pitts.

But you go back to the book of Genesis, okay?”

“And it talks about where Jacob was when his wife died, and she was buried in the way to Ephros, which is Bethlehem. And two different places, it mentions Ephros, but it also mentions

something else. And Israel, which is Jacob's new name, journeyed and spread his tent toward the Tower of Eder, or Eder.

There's two pronunciations for it. The Tower of Eder, or Tower of Eder.

If you move over to Micah 4, verse number 8, that is also known as the Tower of the Flocks. That, and I'm not going to tell you about it, because, man, it's wonderful.

I want you to go home, and I want you to get on the Internet, and I want you to Google, Micah, Eder, or Micah, Eder.

Okay? You Google it.

Find a website that says Truth in Scripture, because it's a good one, and it will tell you things that perhaps you've never thought about.

And it all plays in with Bethlehem.

It all is important to Bethlehem."

"It explains so many things about the need for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, and why it was the shepherds, and why the sign they looked for, and on and on and on.

It is a wonderful, wonderful website.

Let me just read Micah 4.18. It says, And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of thine, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, the kingdom. That is Jesus, the Messiah, bringing the kingdom, okay?

And shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Well, who is that? That is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Now, like I said, that is, it's a wonderful study, and it changes how you see some things, but folks, it opens up why Bethlehem, okay? So, you need to understand that Isaiah backs it up, beauty from ashes.

Genesis backs it up.

It's all in there for us to imagine. The first and most important reason, perhaps, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem was to fulfill prophecy.

To fulfill prophecy.

God is huge on the fulfillment of prophecy. Everything these Old Testament saints prophesied has happened except one thing."

"One thing, and that is the birth or that is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I just told you, I just told you, many in Bethlehem missed the birth of Jesus Christ.

Why?

Because they could prophesied the house of Jesus.

You know what the Christmas song we sing, Olden Town of Bethlehem.

How still we see the light above the deep.

Dreamless sleep, no expectations, no dreams, no hopes.

That's my hand, which is a bygone thought.

Nothing, you know, it's like, you said this probably about the town you live in, nothing ever happened in this town.

Nothing big ever happened in this town.

Just bad stuff, ugly stuff, whatever, nothing bigger.

They said it about the birth of Jesus, when it was prophesied over and over that it was going to be in Bethlehem, and nobody in Bethlehem got it.

And I wonder, was the return of Christ imminent? I'm telling you, imminent.

Are people going to get it?

Are people going to be ready?

Are we going to be ready? Are we going to be prepared?"

"Because that is the only thing that's been prophesied that has not come to pass yet, and it will come to pass.

I promise you, it may be in my lifetime, it may be in my children's lifetime, or my grandchildren's lifetime, but it will come to pass. The Bible says, nobody knows exactly when, not even the angels in heaven, but there will be come a day when Jesus looks over at his son, and says, go get to church, and you bring him home to me. And the Trump of God is going to found church, and it's going to happen.

But like Bethlehem, so many people are going to miss it.

They missed the birth of the Messiah, for goodness sake.

It had been prophesied.

It had been told, it's going to happen.

It's going to happen.

It happened in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy.

That's the past.

But it also happened in Bethlehem to prepare us for the future.

Okay?

To get us ready for the future."

“So the fulfillment of prophecy, they said it was going to happen. They promised it was going to happen. But it's genesis, and in my case, it's all in a place.

And those scriptures and the website I told you about will tell you where it happened. We should know where it happened, in this table behind the end.

Okay?

Check it out.

Check it out.

Okay?

All right. Then I will tell you about it.

Okay.

You point forward now.

We've looked back. We've seen the prophecy.

It's a real prophecy.

But why else?

Because Bethlehem also translates to the meaning house of prayer.

Well, why is that significant?

Oh, I'm glad you asked.

What did Jesus say in the Last Supper with His disciples?

What did He tell them?

He said, I am the bread which is broken.

He is the bread that was broken for each of us.

Okay?

That's Luke 22 and 19. Before that, He had said that He is the true bread which came down from heaven.

That's John 6, 32 and 33.

And in John 6 and 35, He said, He is the bread of life.”

“Bread over and over and over and over again.

He referred to Himself as the bread.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which means the house of bread, to identify as common, ordinary, every man and woman, okay?

Bethlehem was no place special that anybody thought, and yet God had a great plan for Bethlehem.

Now, Jesus was not born into royalty. He was not born into riches. He was not born into somebody well-known or of celebrity status.

He was not born in Jerusalem, like I, you know, makes perfect sense to me, because it's the religious capital of the entire nation. He was not born there.

He was not born in Rome, which was a ruling capital.

He was not born in Athens or Alexandria. He was not born in any political, commercial, cultural, educational, or socially significant anything in the day.

He was born in very common means to be able to be related to a very common people.

Micah 5 and 2, I'm going to read it from the NIV this time. It says, but you, that's the hand in Rock Island. Oh, you are small among the clans of Jews.

Nothing, insignificant.”

“Out of you will come from me, one who will be the ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old and from ancient times.

What's he talking about?

He's talking about, they've been talking about this, his genesis, the one who was to come.

The one who was to come.

They've been talking about this genesis.

You come back tonight, Bruce is gonna hit on some of that tonight also.

All right?

Through the lens of Moses, you'll see it.

Well, why bread? You know anyone, and I bet you do, who cannot eat a meal without some kind of bread, whether it's a roll, a biscuit, or just a slice of bread.

It's just, you know, you gotta have it.

You just do.

Those of you who eat runny eggs, I know why you eat runny eggs.

So you can take toasts and stop them up. You can't do it if you don't have bread.

Bread is just, it's been around since Bible times, for goodness sake.

It is common to everyone.

It only makes sense that Jesus would come from the house of bread.

Who was His birth announced to?

Shepherds.

Come on, y'all. This is Christmas."

"You ought to know this story by now.

If you don't, you watch these kids next Sunday night, they're going to tell you. He was announced to shepherds. Who was He not announced to?

King Herod, the ruler of the land.

When the wise men came to visit him, they inquired, who is this new king of Israel?

And the Bible doesn't tell you this, but Herod said, oh, no.

But I want to know. You find him.

You come back and tell me.

He didn't want to know for good.

He wanted to know for evil.

All right.

Herod, later on, was the one who passed the decree to slay all of the male children to your old number.

There's something huge in that, too, but I just won't have time to get there.

Study it out, people. This Christmas story is magnificent once you get it all pieced together.

I'm telling you.

Okay, he was a mount.

He said, what was he laid in?

A manger. Exactly. Now, y'all think about a wood manger.

I'm sorry, but it's not.

It's made of stone."

"They don't have a lot of wood in Israel, but you know what they do have a lot of?

Stone.

Israel is a volcanic land, and it's all rocks.

I mean, it's all rocks.

And that scripture, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, and they told him, hey, Master, quiet the disciples down.

They're all shouting and praising and everything else.

And Jesus said, if they were quiet, the stones would cry out. Church, I've been there.

It would have been definite.

It would have been definite, the noise made from those stones, because everything there is a stone. And this manger was a stone-feeding property. So he was not born in luxury.

He was not born in all of this stuff. Jesus did not come just for the well-known people. He did not come for just the popular people.

He didn't come for just the people who had riches and wealth.

He didn't come for the religious people, the scribes, the Pharisees, the high priests, all that.

He didn't come for just them.

He didn't come for this is a large group, for those who think they don't have it.”
“Doesn't the Bible say, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?

It definitely does.

It definitely does. I can tell you that. It definitely does.

Who is whosoever?

Bless me and you. He is the bread.

Now, you know what bread does?

Once you're hungry, you can live on bread.

Bread sustains life. It satisfies hunger.

Is that not what Jesus came to do spiritually? To sustain life, to satisfy a spiritual hunger?

I guarantee it is.

Jesus said, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never go hungry. He who believes in me shall never be thirsty.

That's John 6 and 35.

That is what it is. And bread, to be born in the house of bread, it's a wonderful correlation. It goes hand in hand.

It's literally like God had this plan. Well, guess what?

He did. He did.

You know, there's a verse in Isaiah, and it relates to the fact that a lot of people are eating.

We're not eating at the table of selfishness.

We're eating at the table of unconcern and unfair. And there's a long list."

"Well, let me read this out to Isaiah. This is Isaiah 55 and 2.

Why spend money on what is not bread?

Why spend money on what is not bread?

And your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen. He says, listen to me and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of berries.

It is easy to get caught up in life searching for the wrong thing, the things that just don't matter, the meaning of the wrong thing, getting caught up in the wrong things.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, The House of Bread. To teach us that we must choose ourselves.

If you remember nothing else this morning, you remember when I'm getting ready to share with you. I wrote this down, and I thought, man, oh man, that did not come from me. I mean, it makes too much sense to have come from me.

We each one eat bread to satisfy our own hunger.

We all agree on that.

We each one eat bread to satisfy our own hunger.

Us eating bread will not satisfy anyone else's hunger.

Because I am me, I satisfy you."

"I can satisfy your heart by satisfying my heart.

We all have to do it, partially, individually.

You know what Jesus wants us to understand in this?

1 Corinthians 1 and 17 says we're all protectors of that one bread.

That one bread of Jesus.

Let me read to you, and this is not mine, I copied this down off of an article.

It says, Christ is all the soul of man needs for spiritual satisfaction.

The fact that Jesus was born in the house of bread gives us confidence that God does indeed want to choose us to be his children. No matter how insignificant we may seem to ourselves or to the world around us, he cares about us.

He is the bread of life.

I want to close with some words from an old song we used to sing.

Greg, you remember that old song we used to sing, I'll turn it to you.

I'm going back years now, brother.

Some of you have been there, you might remember that old song I turned to you.

But to the line in that song, I've never, ever forgotten.

And I never will.

It says this."

"The song is about asking God for things and realizing how much they need God. When he has no place to turn, he's turning to God.

This person is turning back to God.

He says, that's for the faith to move ahead and to let go of the past and to see me as you do.

And now I am struck home with me.

You know how you see yourself.

And some of you have let the devil convince how you see yourself, convince you of how you see yourself.

You need to see yourself like God sees you.

God sees you in a whole different light.

You are his child.

He loves you.

He cares about you.

He will not turn his back on you. It doesn't matter where you've been, what you've done, or whatever. When you turn back to him, when you just turn to him, he will embrace you.

Because you've got to turn.

It's like having a whole table spread, and you're starting to death, but you refuse to eat.

That's what Jesus is.

He said, I turn to you.

And here in your whole life, in your holy presence, it's all that I can do.

"I turn to you, Jesus.

I turn to you, Lord.

What else can I do?

I turn to you.

Why?

Because you alone are worthy.

The one and only God, the ruler of all nations, the father of my heart.

My best, the ham.

Perfect sense once you understand it.

Until you understand it, Jerusalem seems like the perfect place.

Or to me, it did.

The death land was exactly what God designed.

Because of the name, because of the prophecy, because of what the birth of Jesus represents.

Salvation.

To a hungry, starving person, bread is salvation.

You've heard of talk about prisoners with a bread and water diet.

But you know what has to happen?

He's already chosen you.

He's already chosen you. You just must be willing to choose him.

All right, Greg.

Why Bethlehem?

That's why.

That's why.

And I've got so much more I could tell you to reinforce, not only why Bethlehem, but where Bethlehem. Bethlehem plays a part in this hugely."

"For another time, or for your own research.

Stand with me this morning. What's your choice? What do you choose?

God has chosen you.

God has chosen us.

Are you willing to choose him?"

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