

# THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

## *A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God*

### *Why Bethlehem?*

Luke 2: 1-5

**Introduction:** In fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. There is far more to the story, however, than just being born in a particular city. Everything about this event is laden with rich symbolism of the very special Passover Lamb of God, as we shall see in this study.

#### I. Key Features of Bethlehem & Its Significance

Bethlehem lies about 6 miles SW of Jerusalem at an altitude over 2,300 feet. The area surrounding Bethlehem is quite fertile making it ideal for grazing sheep. It is known as Ephrath or Ephrathah and Bethlehem Judea to distinguish it from the other Bethlehem. It was David's place of birth and known as the City of David.

- A. Bethlehem means *house of bread* while Ephrath means *fruitful place*
- B. In 1 Chronicles 11:17-19 David craves water from the well in Bethlehem; in John 7:37-39, at the Feast of Tabernacles, just as the water offering is poured out Jesus cries out, I Am the Living Water!
- C. Bethlehem was universally known as the place of the sacrificial Temple lambs and the home of the shepherds who tended them
- D. The birthing place of the lambs was the tower of Migdol Eder where they would be swaddled and inspected by the priests for suitability of sacrifice. (Micah 4:8)
- E. Bethlehem is located in Judah, the City of David the King. (Micah 5:2)

#### II. Key Features in the Genealogy

- A. Joseph is of the house and lineage of David—KING
- B. Mary is of the house of Aaron—PRIEST
- C. No prophet arises out of Galilee, but THE Prophet comes from Bethlehem—PROPHET

#### III. Providence of God in the Fulfillment of Prophecy

- A. The decree went out to take a census requiring Joseph to journey to Bethlehem
- B. The timing of the census:
  - 1. Quirinius was Governor of Syria
  - 2. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles
  - 3. Approximate calendar time was late September to early October
- C. Joseph had married Mary at this time so she traveled with him to register

**Conclusion:** God is the God of history and the Lord of glory. There is nothing too difficult for Him, and there are no accidents or happenstance in His eternal, providential plans. He is the Lord of circumstances and a motivator of people who do not even know Him but who are essential to the accomplishment of His will.

We are safe with a God like this; One who takes into account every detail and leaves nothing to chance. He cares for us and oversees our lives as One Who can order our steps and make sure our paths are clear.

In these amazing circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus we have a foreshadowing of everything His life is destined to be and for those who have eyes to see we fall down and worship Him Who is born King of the Jews, Lamb of God, Savior of the world.

*Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.*

*Luke 2: 1-5 (NASB)*

*I AM the Bread of Life*

*I AM the Living Water*

*I AM the Door of the Sheep*

*I AM the Good Shepherd*

*The LAMB of God who takes away the sin of the world*

*The Lion of the Tribe of JUDAH*

*A KING from the line of David*

