

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE MESSIAH

Micah 5:2, "But you, O Bethlehem, Ephratah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." (- "from days of eternity"- NIV Margin note)

Christmas started long before Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem. We might say it really all started in the mind of God the Father long before the first star in the first galaxy was created.

When we speak of the manifestation of the messiah, we begin by thinking, however, of the insignificant, unimportant little town where Jesus was born of Mary in the days of the Roman Empire.

I. The Place where Jesus was manifested is important to Christians if not to most of the rest of the world.

A. Bethlehem is one of the oldest towns in Palestine, already in existence at the time of Jacob's return to the country from Egypt.

Its earliest name was Ephrath or Ephratah.

It is five or six miles from Jerusalem on a hill covered with vines and olive trees, beautifully terraced for agriculture.

Micah 5: 2 reminds us that Bethlehem is of humble but God-chosen origin, and of humble but strong position among all the towns of Judea.

The name "Bethlehem" means "house of bread," or "house of flesh." Bread, wheat, barley, grains are for the making of bread, the staff of life. Flesh or meat reminds us of the incarnation.

"Ephratah" means "fruitful."

B. Here in this place Rachel had died and was buried. Here the story of Ruth and Boaz found its setting. It is the city of David, the scene of his early exploits and the home of his kindred.

Here David was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel (I Sam. 16:13) and from Bethlehem Saul sent for David to minister to him with his harp (I Sam. 16:19)

16:19). It was one of the strongholds fortified by Rehoboam. After the Captivity a small band of Bethlehemites returned to their old home and continued the faith and traditions of their fathers.

In Bethlehem the Grotto and Church of the Nativity stands today. Tradition tells us that this great church was erected by the Empress Helena about 330 AD; if this is true, it would be the oldest church in the world. Below the main level of the church is the Grotto of the Nativity, 33 feet long by 11 feet wide, and furnished with silver and crystal lamps hanging from the ceiling. The visitor is shown a marble trough believed by some to be the manger where Christ was born.

C. Although Bethlehem or Ephratah is a very old town or village, it is not very significant in size or population. It is not even listed among the cities of Judah in Joshua 15 or in Nehemiah 11. The population has long numbered around 7,000 people. Micah refers to Bethlehem as "little among the clans of Judah," and it IS little in worldly importance, but not the least in spiritual importance, being the birthplace of the Messiah. Often God chooses the little things of the world to eclipse in glory the greatest things.

During the time of the birth of Christ, the attention of the world was focused on Caesar and Rome rather than on Christ and Bethlehem.

This was not the first time or the only time the world had missed the point. This is illustrated by a true story of what happened on December 17, 1903, when Orville and Wilbur Wright were able to keep their hand-built airplane in the air in North Carolina for 59 seconds. This was a moment that changed history. We are told that in their excitement they immediately sent a telegram to their sister back in Dayton, Ohio. It read: "First sustained flight today in 59 seconds. Hope to be home for Christmas." Their sister was so excited by the good news that she took the telegram with its

big news to the editor of the local newspaper. The next morning, to her surprise, the newspaper splashed out the news in big bold letters, "Popular Local Merchants to be Home for the Holidays!" The biggest news of the time passed by Dayton, Ohio, on that historic day. The newspaper office completely missed the point. Commenting on this, someone said that this is often our problem, too.

II. The Manner of the Manifestation

A. Incarnation means "into flesh." It refers to the way God assumed human nature in Jesus Christ. The classical statement of this central Christian doctrine is John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and tented among us." This teaching is closely related to the important doctrines of the divine sonship of Christ, his sinlessness, his pre-existence and virgin birth.

B. The virgin birth explains in a human way the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Matt. 1:18 says, "Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit." Rom. 1:3 says that Jesus Christ was "of the seed of David according to the flesh." Gal. 4:4 says that he was "made of a woman." Note that he was the "seed of the woman," not of the man. By a creative act God broke through the chain of human generation and brought into the world a supernatural being. All the manuscripts in all the ancient versions of the Scriptures contain the record of the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke. All the traditions of the early church recognize this truth. The earliest of all the Christian creeds, the Apostles' Creed, specifically mentions it. It is in perfect harmony with all the other facts of that wonderful life of our Savior. It would seem logical that such a wonderful life as that lived by Christ, having as it did such a wonderful FINISH in the resurrection and ascension, might, INDEED SHOULD, have a wonderful and extraordinary entrance into the world.

III. What is Revealed by this Manifestation of the Messiah?

A. First, His Deity is Revealed.

Jesus Christ is GOD.

Paul speaks of him as "God manifest in the flesh." John 1:1 says, "The Word was God."

Heb. 1:8, a passage that speaks of Jesus Christ, says, "Thy throne, O GOD, is forever."

In John 1:18 the best manuscripts speak of Jesus as "the only begotten GOD."

In Jn. 20:28 Christ accepts Thomas' confession of faith, "My Lord and my GOD."

Paul in Rom. 9:5 calls Jesus "GOD blessed forever. Titus 2:15 is very clear about "The great God and our Savior Jesus" being one and the same.

I John 5:20 speaks in no uncertain terms of "his Son Jesus Christ" as "the true GOD."

And II Cor. 4:4 and 6 assert that Christ is the image of the invisible God.

Who could possibly doubt that the manuscripts of the New Testament clearly teach the deity of Jesus?

B. Second, his eternal pre-existence is revealed.

In Jn. 1:1, the phrase "In the beginning" can easily be compared with Gen. 1:1. In Jn. 8:58 Jesus says, "Before Abraham Was, I am;" in other words, "I existed before Abraham was born."

1. Again in his intercessory prayer in Jn. 17 Jesus prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," and in verse 24, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Again, Jn. 3:13, referring to his pre-existence, speaks of how the Son of Man came down from heaven, thus denying his natural beginning at Bethlehem.

And in Jn 16:28 Jesus says in his own words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." We read in Col. 1:17 that "He is before all things," and in I Jn. 1:1-4 that he "was from the beginning...the Word of life...[and] was manifested" as the eternal Son of God, our Lord and Savior.

Surely all who accept the New Testament as the inspired Word of God must understand that it clearly teaches the eternal pre-existence of Jesus Christ, as Micah said "whose origin is from of old, even from ancient days" even from everlasting as the triune Godhead. "Days of eternity"

2. The previous "goings forth" of the Son included his going forth to create the world, as we read in Col. 1:16-18, "For by him were all things created...and all things were created by him, and for him." So do we read in Jn. 1:3 and 10 that "All things were made by him: and without him was not anything made that was made...He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

In like manner the writer to the Hebrews says of Jesus, "By whom [Jesus] he [God] made the worlds."

IV. The Purpose of the Messiah's Manifestation at Bethlehem

A. To be a Ruler - "a ruler in Israel." Gen. 49:10 had said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." Christ is this "Shiloh," or Messiah and Ruler. In Mat. 2:6 where ~~this verse in~~ Micah 5:2 is quoted, we find the word meaning "to rule" translated with a Greek word meaning "to tend like a shepherd." Yes, it means "to rule" also, but it is to rule like a shepherd cares for his sheep, not like a tyrant rules over his slaves.

B. To be the Redeemer.

The angels told the Shepherds that the primary purpose of the coming of Christ, more than to be just a Ruler, was to be the Savior, (Lk. 2:11). The NAME of Jesus means Savior (Mt. 1:21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

CONCLUSION: The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem furnishes a marvelous example of the accuracy of inspired scripture. The promise of the Redeemer was at first vaguely general, (Gen. 3:15, "the seed of the woman"); then it grows clearer, defining the race and nation from which the Deliverer should come, that is, the seed of Abraham, the Jews (Gen. 12:3); then the particular tribe, Judah (Gen. 49:10); then the family, that of David (Ps. 89:19, 20); then the very town of his birth, Bethlehem. Moreover, the 70 weeks of years in Daniel's prophecy had so clearly defined the TIME of the coming of the messiah that the minds of many in the nation were raised into an almost frenzied expectation of him. This is why many thought that perhaps John the Baptist might be the messiah (Lk. 3:15). Many who rejected Christ were in a state of willful blindness and determined obstinacy. Many who knew the scriptures would not believe on him or receive him as the messiah. Be careful that you are not like them.

We Christians today live between two advents — the first advent when Jesus Christ came to die on the cross for our sins, and the Second advent when he is coming in judgment upon all who do not will to believe on him, and who deliberately reject him against their best instincts and knowledge.

We who are Christmas people today must go out into the Christ-rejecting and God-ignoring people as peacemakers and gospel ambassadors. We go out into a world of conflicting ideologies, of cutthroat competition, of idolatry and harsh power. We go believing that the final victory belongs to those who, in our darkened world, have ears to hear the message the prophet Micah prophesied of the little town of Bethlehem so long ago.

Have you trusted in this promised one who came to be our ruler and redeemer? Have you committed your heart and life to Him as your Lord and Savior? If not, will you do so right now, and come forward confessing your faith in him as we stand and sing?

D#37, "messiah"
11-27-88-Pasadena Bap. L. St. Pete.

10-10

MANIFESTATION
THE GOINGS FORTH OF THE MESSIAH -- Micah 5:2

Notes on ¹⁰⁻¹⁰ 88:33/CT. II

I. The Place from which He Came Forth - Bethlehem

A. Description. One of the oldest towns in Palestine, already in existence at the time of Jacob's return to the country. Its earliest name was Ephrath or Ephratah. Five miles from J'lem on a hill covered with vines and olive trees, beautifully terraced for agriculture. 88:54

B. Meaning of the name.

1. Beth-lehem means "house of bread", or "House of flesh". Bread, wheat, barley, grain for bread. House of flesh, Incarnation.

2. Ephratah means "fruitful".

C. History. Here Rachel had died and was buried.

Here the story of Ruth and Boaz found its setting. It is the city of David, the scene of his early exploits and the home of his kindred. Here he was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel (I Sam 16:13) and from Bethlehem Saul sent for David to minister to him with his harp (I. Sam 16:19). It was one of the strongholds built by Rehoboam. After the Captivity a small band of Bethlehemites returned to their old dwelling-place.

D. The Grotto and Church of the Nativity. Church erected by Empress Helena about 330 A.D. is the oldest in the world, held in common by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian church. Below the church is the Grotto of the Nativity, 33 feet long by 11 wide, furnished with silver and crystal lamps hanging from the ceiling. The visitor is shown a marble trough believed to be the manger where Christ was born.

E. Significance of its size and importance. So insignificant in size and population that it is not enumerated among the cities of Judah in Joshua 15 or in Nehemiah 11. Present population numbers only about 7,000. Little in worldly importance, but not the least in spiritual importance, being the birthplace of the Messiah. Moses had divided the people into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, with their respective "rulers" (Ex. 18:25; I Sam 10:19). Often God chooses the little things of the world to eclipse in glory the greatest things.

Humility - yet God-chosen
- yet strong.

MISSING
P. N. 82-321

II. The Manner of His manifestation

A. The Incarnation. Means "into flesh", the assumption of human nature by God in Jesus Christ. Classical statement John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". Very closely bound up with it are the important teachings of the divine sonship of Christ, his sinlessness, his pre-existence and virgin birth.

B. The Virgin Birth. This explains the method of the incarnation. Matt. 1:18, "Mary... was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Rom. 1:3, "Of the seed of David according to the flesh." Gal. 4:4, "Made of a woman." There was something supernatural surrounding the birth of Christ. Matt 1:18, "On this wise" indicates that this birth was different from those recorded before it. Luke 1:35, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He was the "seed of the woman," not of the man. By a creative act God broke through the chain of human generation and brought into the world a supernatural being. All the manuscripts in all the ancient versions of the Scriptures contain the record of the virgin birth in Matthew and Luke. All the traditions of the early church recognizes it. Mention of it is made in the earliest of all the creeds, the Apostles' Creed. It is in perfect harmony with all the other facts of that wonderful life of our Savior. It would seem logical that such a wonderful life as that lived by Christ, having as it did such a wonderful finish in the resurrection and ascension, might, indeed should, have a wonderful and extraordinary entrance into the world.

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Titus 2:13, "The great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" I John 5:20, "His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God." II Cor. 4:4,6 and Col. 1:15 assert that Christ is the image of the invisible God

B. His Eternal Pre-Existence is revealed.

John 1:1 "In the beginning" can easily be compared with Gen. 1:1. John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am" John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." v. 24, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John 3:13, "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man" 6:62, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" v. 33, "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." v. 38, "For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." 16:28, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." Col. 1:17, "He is before all things." I John 1:1-4, "That which was from the beginning....the Word of life...was manifested...."

C. His humility is manifested.

IV. Previous goings forth from the days of eternity.

A. Micah 5:2, "Shall come forth unto me...whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." From the days of eternity. Isaiah 9:6 careful distinction "unto us a child is born (in time), unto us a son is (not born) but given (not in time, but from eternity)

B. Going forth to create the world. Col. 1:16-18, "For by Him were all things created....All things were created by him, and for him..." John 1:3,10, "All things were made by him: and without him was not any thing made that was made....He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Heb. 1:1-3, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds"

C. Going forth to Jacob at Bethel.

D. Going forth to Moses at the burning bush.

E. Going forth to Joshua as capt. of the Lord's hosts.

(Josh. 1:1-15)

V. The Purpose of His coming forth at Bethlehem.

A. To be Ruler or Governor. Genesis 49:10 had said,

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"

Christ is this "Shiloh", Messiah, Ruler, and

Lawgiver. Isaiah 9:6, "And the government shall be

upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting

Father, The Prince of Peace, ---"Of the increase of

his government and peace there shall be no end."

Matthew 2:6, where this verse in Micah is quoted

uses the word meaning "to feed", as a shepherd

feeds his flock, as well as "to rule" my people.

B. But Luke records that the angels told the Shepherds

that the primary purpose of the coming of Christ,

more than to be ruler, was to be the Savior. (Lk. 2:11)

The name Jesus means Savior (Mt. 1:21, "Thou shalt

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10 Dec 78, WAC meml. Chapel
24 Dec. 61, S. H. Ch. no. 7 St. Bear, G. B. D#89 "messiah"
22 Dec. 63, Cent. Ch. Augsburg