

Summary Handout

“Unto You is Born . . . A Savior”

Lesson

3

Summary

Luke 2; Angelic ministrants herald the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem—He is circumcised, and Simeon and Anna prophesy of his mission—At twelve years he is about his Father’s business.

Matthew 2; The wise men are directed by a star to Jesus—Joseph takes the child to Egypt—Herod slays the children in Bethlehem—Jesus is taken to Nazareth to dwell.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **Where Has the Real Bethlehem Gone?** I live right next to Bethlehem. The sheep and shepherds are my neighbors. I have experienced visiting Bethlehem and the nearby hillsides close to seven hundred times. To me, it is like stepping out of the present and into an eternal time warp. Still, things are so similar to the land Jesus knew. Today many people travel to the Holy Land to look for Jesus by scenes from Christmas cards. Their traditional perceptions come from the West. Let’s draw our attention to the East where it really happened. First, let’s examine the traditional site. One foreign broadcast correspondent once commented about his Christmas visit in Israel. He said that Bethlehem should be spelled, B-E-D-L-A-M. The conflict, chaos, and confusion of that Christmas Day were not what he had expected. After that, let’s examine the not-so-well-known site, where sheep and shepherds still roam on the hillsides of Bethlehem.

The Nativity Church: The traditionally accepted birthplace of Jesus is in a grotto located under the Nativity Church. A grotto or cave is probable because stables were usually on the ground floor or underneath the inn rooms or underneath rooms for a family. Luke uses the Greek term, “Katalima” which means the guest chamber of a family estate, (he uses the word again as the “upper room” for Jesus’ last earthly supper). Three Christian churches, the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Catholic, hold separate services here and maintain a star decorating the place of birth. The three churches rotate their rights in using the grotto. Each church’s priests, in turn, bring their own decorative accouterments, adornments, carpets, and curtains to be used during their particular mass or service. After that they must remove all of their items, relinquishing the temporary ownership during their mass to the next religious group.

Skyline Has Changed: Opposite or close to every Christian church in this Holy Land is a Moslem mosque; and Bethlehem’s Manger Square is no exception. Also, across the street are the local municipality offices and souvenir shops. New television antennas stretch up from the aged housetops. The skyline surely is a contrast to what the village of Bethlehem must have looked like twenty centuries ago. Let’s turn back to that time.

Ruth and Naomi in Bethlehem: Around Bethlehem are numerous hills still grazed by sheep and goats. In the spring, the small fields, supported by terraces, are planted with wheat or barley. It was to these hills that the widows Naomi and Ruth returned from Moab. Ruth gathered after the reapers; her good fortune was to come to the fields of Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi’s late husband, Elimelech. “. . . *So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess . . . and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*” (**Ruth 1:3-22**) That is the spring season when Israelites remember being delivered from bondage, the time of Passover.

The Royal Line: Ruth married Boaz and had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, who tended flocks and crops in these same hills. It is still the Middle-East custom for the husband’s family to care for the late husband’s widowed wife. What Boaz did was culturally proper, and it certainly blossomed into a sweet love story. A genetic line begins as he marries Ruth, a foreign convert, and that set the stage for a line of kings. “*So Boaz took Ruth . . . and she bare a son. . . and they called his name Obed: He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*” (**Ruth 4:13, 16-17**) In obscurity, in his childhood, he was ordained the king of Israel. Yet he continued to be a shepherd; surely he was a good shepherd. Born at Bethlehem he was promised by God that his seed would bring the King of Kings, the Messiah – also to be known as the Good Shepherd.

Jews Await a Latter-day David: That ancient David proved himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. In spite of his sinfulness later in his life, Israelis still sing about the old David, King of Israel, awaiting a new Davidic descendant. Virtually every Bar Mitzvah celebration is enhanced by singing to the Jewish lad being honored. He is treated as an expected David, one that should come in latter-days, out of obscurity, to reestablish a righteous kingdom. Christians feel

that the Davidic prophecies were fulfilled with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. But the earthly Davidic Kingdom did not happen. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: 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 . . .” (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

Latter-day David: In considering the words of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, the Jewish expectation of a latter-day (earthly) David seems to include a person similar to the ancient David in addition to the (heavenly) Davidic Messiah, the King of Kings. He may also come out of obscurity. *“. . . they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.” (Jeremiah 30:9)* *“. . . I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.” (Ezekiel 34:24)* *“Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.” (Hosea 3:5)* If ancient events are any kind of pattern for the future, the latter-day David may be like the ancient David. He probably will prove himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. The people may then want to proclaim him a king. Although honored as a prince or a noble person, he will introduce and bear witness of the King of Kings, the one who came in the meridian of time and will return in the latter-days.

Jesus Born on Passover: A simple story that comes out of obscurity is the introduction of the Davidic descendant, the King of Kings. It was Passover. According to the biblical calendar, Passover always occurs on the first full moon after the first day of spring. By the way, April 6, 1830 is the date the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. It was also the first full moon after the first day of spring. It was Passover. The Deliverer was born as Israel celebrated the deliverance from Egypt as well as the expectation of an even greater deliverance. The two deliverances are linked by a journey of time through two millennia.

Most Don't Even Know of Him: Although most of the six million inhabitants of this little land of Israel do not even know anything about the Deliverer, I am grateful that I do. Some of my neighbors are shepherds, possibly descendants of ancient shepherds. My family and I have shared their happiness when their babies were born, as naturally as the baby lambs are born.

Jesus' Youth at Nazareth, Carpentry or Working with Stone? Jesus' youth was spent in Nazareth, an obscure town in the region of Galilee. Today it is a busy twin city of Arabs and Jews. The “Old City” is one of the largest Arab communities in Israel. About twelve hundred feet above sea level and halfway between the Mediterranean and the waters of Galilee, this out-of-the-way town became the childhood home of Jesus. His upbringing surely included learning the tasks and crafts of his environment. Although western language Bibles refer to Mary's husband, Joseph, as a carpenter, the Greek Bible calls him a craftsman. The industry of Nazareth was, and still is, the regional rock quarry. Jesus surely could have worked in the stone trade. Interestingly, Jehovah in Hebrew, is also called the “Rock of Salvation.” “Jehovah Saves” was pronounced “Yehoshua” and later as “Jesus.” *“The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my . . . salvation . . . my savior . . .” (2 Samuel 22:3)*

Jesus, the Lawgiver: Although it is popular to consider Jesus as a carpenter, He also studied the Law of Moses. In fact, he was considered a rabbi, one schooled in the law. At twelve years of age he was in the temple – with the lawyers -- answering and asking questions. Was this an apprentice craftsman or an apprentice lawyer becoming a “son of the law” (*Bar Mitzvah* in Aramaic)? Nowadays, someone schooled in the law is called a lawyer. Jesus was the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father. *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22)*

Bar Mitzvah: An added thought about Jesus' youth includes his experience at the Temple. It is suggested that Jesus was there at the age of twelve to become a “Son of the Law.” That expression in Aramaic is “Bar Mitzvah,” which usually happens at the end of the twelfth year, usually at his thirteenth birthday. In some Jewish circles, a boy may become a Bar Mitzvah one year earlier if he has no father. Jesus had no earthly father. Gently, bringing them beyond the present, He reminded His parents of His eternal mission. *“. . . I must be about my Father's business.” (Luke 2:49)*

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