

“WHERE JESUS WAS BORN”

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Matthew 2:1-6 NKJV)

I introduced last Sunday's sermon by talking about the year that I was born. So today I will say a few words about where I was born. I was born in Elkins, West Virginia. It is in the Tygart Valley, surrounded by mountains. To this day, when I return to West Virginia, the mountains seem to be enfolding me, hugging me, welcoming me home.

As we prepare to study where Jesus was born, let us consider some of the places where He was not born. He was not born in heaven, even though as the Son of God, He had dwelt there eternally. He was not born in any of the major centers of the ancient world, not in Rome or Greece, or Egypt, or India, or China, or Japan, or North America, or South America even though all those places had advanced civilizations when He was born. He was not born in Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, much to the surprise of the Wise Men who had come to see the one who had been born king of the Jews.

1. He Was Born On Earth.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? (Psalms 8:3-4 NKJV)

LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him? (Psalms 144:3 NKJV)

If you look up at the heavens on a clear night there are so many stars that you cannot count them. It is only reasonable to assume that many of those stars have planets orbiting about them just like our sun's solar system. Could some of those planets contain intelligent life? There have been attempts both scientific and pseudo-scientific to determine if there is intelligent life in other parts of the universe.

In Green Bank, West Virginia there is a radio observatory. There are huge antennas spread over acres of land. These antennas collect radio emissions from outer space. Sophisticated computers analyze these emissions to try to discover some intelligent pattern which would indicate they were transmissions by some intelligent creatures.

There are also societies all over the world interested in unidentified flying objects and extraterrestrial beings. A Turkish society last year reported the first photographs of an extraterrestrial being. They posted the pictures on UTube. However, it was discovered that they were a hoax and the pictures were removed from UTube.

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:16 NKJV)

The Mormons point to this verse to back up their claim that Jesus came to North and South America and ministered to the Indians. Others have wondered if the "other sheep" Jesus was referring to are inhabitants of other planets in the universe.

Whatever inhabited planets there may be in far flung space, it was on Earth that God created man in his own image and it was on Earth that Jesus was born, "Emmanuel – God with us."

2. Jesus Was Born In Bethlehem of Judea.

Bethlehem was located on a mountain ridge. Its altitude is 2550 feet, a couple hundred feet higher than Jerusalem. It was a little closer to heaven. We often overlook the conversation between the baby Jesus and the heavenly Father recorded in Hebrews:

For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?(Hebrews 1:5) Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come--In the volume of the book it is written of Me--To do Your will, O God.'" (Hebrews 10:5-7 NKJV)

Bethlehem is the town associated with Rachel, wife of Jacob, mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Her tomb is there. It was the town of Naomi. Here Ruth met and married Boaz. This was the hometown of David.

By the providence of God, Jesus was born in Bethlehem because by order of the Roman authorities Joseph and Mary had to go there to be registered in a census.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. (Luke 2:1-6 NKJV)

Jesus was born in Bethlehem because it was God's will that He be born there and over seven hundred years before Jesus' birth God revealed, through the prophet Micah, the birthplace of the Messiah. It was this prophecy that was quoted to the Wise Men.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the

children of Israel. And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth; (Micah 5:2-4 NKJV)

3. Jesus Was Born In A Stable.

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7 NKJV)

In Biblical studies there are fads, especially in areas that are unknown. All the Christmas cards and Christmas pageants and classical paintings show Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in some kind of wooden structure. Now the fad is to say that Jesus was born in a cave because archaeologists have found caves in that area that were used to shelter animals. The Bible doesn't say that there was a stable, only that Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. A manger is a feeding trough for animals and there are many of those in open fields. Mary may have given birth in an open field, laid her baby in a manger and huddled together with Joseph nearby.

This is the one of the puzzling things about Jesus' birth. Joseph was the rightful king of Israel. They had come to the city of his lineage, the city of David. He must have had relatives living in Bethlehem. He must have had relatives among all those travelers who had come to Bethlehem to be registered in the census. Why didn't any of them offer hospitality to Joseph and Mary? Why is it that Mary, a young woman in her first pregnancy, did not have any other woman there to assist her in childbirth? The only satisfactory answer for me is found in Philippians 2 He "made Himself of no reputation,... and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself..." Even in His birth, He became like the lowliest of mankind. How can we love Him enough?

