

God had prepared the little town of Bethlehem for 1,700 years for the birth of his son Jesus. - At the time of Jesus' birth Bethlehem was an **insignificant town**, in the shadow of Jerusalem - a watering hole for shepherds - a place for the working humble to dwell.

Bethlehem is near the burial place of Jacob's wife, **Rachel**. She is also known as the bride of Israel; the sister of Leah. She died in child-birth on the way there providing the son, Benjamin, the final patriarch of the twelve tribes of Israel - carriers of Abraham's blessing to be a blessing to the world. (Genesis 35:16-19) Similarly, when Jesus died and was raised again to life, he gave birth as well - to the Church to carry the message of God's grace to the world - our blessing to share to all.

Ruth is redeemed in Bethlehem after returning there with Naomi from Moan by Boaz when the proper man would not. Jesus, born in Bethlehem redeems each of us with his perfect life and sacrifice - because we cannot.

King David was born in and anointed King in Bethlehem. Christ too was born a King. Both David and Christ ruled; David for a relatively short time over a small kingdom - making many mistakes. The other, the Savior who lived perfectly, rules now in our hearts - and later eternally in the kingdom to come.

Bethlehem is where God chose to send his son to be born as one of us.

You and I don't have 1,700 years to be prepared to accept him - and neither do our neighbors. So our job is tough - but not impossible to share the Word of God, to explain the stories and the reasons God used the where, and the what, and the who, and even the when that God chose to use. It is critical we carry the blessing of faith given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob -and to Rachel well enough to pass it on to our sons and daughters. Know the urgency of our call to make disciples of Jesus. Our job is not easy to share the hope given to Ruth, to Israel, to the Church ...that a savior has come from God by way of the little town of Bethlehem. That this child would do for us what we could not - forge the way for us to have a right relationship with our Creator. Although we are insignificant like Bethlehem, although we are in need of redemption like Ruth and I daresay the Church, although we have made more mistakes than David, God loves us! God sent his son to a little town over 2,000 years ago to save us. Hear the Christmas story with new ears - when you leave this place remember to see Bethlehem with new eyes.