

## Backdrop: Bethlehem The Birthplace of the King

### Opening Discussion:

1. Does your hometown or community have a local hero?
2. When you hear the name of Bethlehem, what comes to mind? Who comes to mind?
3. What do you picture when you think of Bethlehem around the time of Jesus?

God loves to do big things in little places.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace. Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. **Micah 5:2-6**

### 1. Bethlehem as a city of mourning and obscurity.

Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). **Genesis 35:19**

### 2. Bethlehem as the city of David.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. **Luke 2:4**

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." **1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16:1**

### 3. Bethlehem as the city of Jesus.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **Luke 2:11**

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him. **John 7:40-43**

The Mishnah is a book of Jewish religious teachings, and this passage was written circa 200 AD: *Beasts which were found in Jerusalem as far as Migdal Eder and within the same distance in any direction: Males are burnt-offerings; Females are peace-offerings. Rabbi Judah says: that which is fit for a Passover offering, is a Passover -offering when found within thirty days before the pilgrimage of Passover.* **Mishnah Shekalim 7:4**

Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.  
For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above;  
While mortals sleep the angels keep their watch of wondering love;  
Oh morning stars together, proclaim thy holy birth.  
And praises sing to God the king, and peace to men on earth. **Phillips Brooks 1868**

### Fill in the Blank Answers:

God loves to do big things in little places.

1. mourning, obscurity, 2. David, 3. Jesus