

## The Miracle of Bethlehem

- ☆ Unexpected (v.2)
- ☆ Brutally opposed (v.3)
- ☆ Gloriously fulfilled (vv.4-5a)

*Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,  
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled  
Within my heart that it may be  
A quiet chamber kept for Thee. (TLH 85:13)*

In the Name of Jesus our newborn King, dear fellow shepherds worshipping at the manger:

Here's a headline from a major news agency this year: **Why are women turning to witchcraft? Psychics and psychologists discuss the tarot and crystal craze** – *Experts say the COVID-19 pandemic, social media platforms like TikTok and a yearning for personal growth could play a role.* Here's another: **Bethlehem called off Christmas. Are Christians still welcome in the city where Jesus was born?** Other violent headlines about fights after football games, murder and politics – all run away from Bethlehem.<sup>1</sup>

So what made those shepherds run to Bethlehem that holy night so long ago? Wasn't it the angel's message? ***"Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born for you,. He is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*** His person is ***the Lord***. His office is the ***Christ***, the long-promised Anointed One. His work is ***Savior***. But none of that would matter unless you heard those two little words ***"for you."*** Yes, this One was born ***for you***. And if you weren't quite ready to "Run, Shepherds, Run," as our children sang a week ago, this would get you there. ***Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind."*** (Luke 2:11-14)

We need to go to the manger this morning to see by faith **The Miracle of Bethlehem** strangely...

### ☆ Unexpected (v.2)

700 years earlier a prophet came named, "Who is like Yahweh?" In Hebrew that's *Micah*. Inspired by God the Holy Spirit, Micah announced the exact place: ***"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel. His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity."*** Little Bethlehem is right next to Jerusalem. You can't miss it unless you blink. It wasn't an **Unexpected** place for a ruler because King David was born in Bethlehem a thousand years before. But this ruler was far greater, begotten of God the Father from ***days of eternity***. That makes this Ruler God Himself. What a **Miracle** in the manger.

No way would the people of that day expect the world's Savior in the backwater nation of Judea on the far end of the Mediterranean Sea. Folks knew Caesar August the Emperor in Rome, Italy. So Doctor Luke (2:1) also reports, ***"A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered."*** Who else but God could get the whole world moving just so a poor couple from Nazareth would have to travel about 90 miles to their hometown of Bethlehem? Who but God could bring an expectant mother so far to such poverty? **Unexpected?** Who was paying attention to a message 700 years old? An old friend used to tell me, "Happiness is finding your glasses when you still remember what you were looking for."

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<sup>1</sup> [www.Foxnews.com](http://www.Foxnews.com)

### ☆ **Brutally opposed** (v.3)

You know who else found out about the place being **Bethlehem**? When the Wise Men came from the east looking in Jerusalem for the King of the Jews, the chief priests and experts in the law looked it up in Malachi and told them along with the very disturbed and evil King Herod these words from Micah: *“You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are certainly not least among the rulers of Judah: because out of you will come a ruler, who will shepherd my people, Israel.”* Paranoid King Herod tried to trick the Wise Men into coming back by telling them secretly, *“Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report to me, so that I may also go and worship him.”* Later when Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Wise Men, he was furious. He issued orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside, from two years old and under. (Matthew 2:6,8,16-18 EHV)

The Miracle in Bethlehem was **Brutally opposed**, but that too was foretold: *“Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”* And Micah foretold a period of about 500 years when it seemed God had abandoned His people. Yet even in desperate times like ours, God always preserves for Himself a Remnant of believers as He said through Micah: *“Therefore the LORD will give them up, until the time when the woman who is in labor bears a child. Then the remaining survivors from his brothers will return to the people of Israel.”*

That *woman in labor* was the same one identified to stepfather Joseph and Mary herself: *“Look, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. And they will name him Immanuel,” which means, “God with us.”* (Matthew 1:23 EHV) For a *young woman* to have a child as some scholars like to argue, where’s the announcement in that? Old women don’t usually have children. But for *the virgin* to have a son, *the virgin* God had foretold through Isaiah, also in the time of Micah (700 BC), that’s big news! **The Miracle of Bethlehem** is the *Seed of the woman* promised by God to our first parents after they rebelled in the Garden of Eden who would *crush the serpent’s head*. (Genesis 3:15)

Bethlehem under siege is no surprise. The tiny town was always wrapped up in the wars over Jerusalem down through the ages. We got a taste of that when we saw so much security there in 2014. God used the security shut-down to take away all the crowds so that Cindy and I with our guide could go all the way to the grotto in the Church of the Nativity where some say Jesus was born. But stone can’t say:

### ☆ **Gloriously fulfilled** (vv.4-5a)

Ever just wish you could have one friend who really cared? Who no matter what would always be on your side, backing you up? One quote seems to be affecting so many, young and old: “If it doesn’t bring you love, peace, or positive energy, stop engaging with it.” But how can you tell if your downhearted and depressed? Does “Positive energy” come from Bethlehem or from running away from God?

Millions hearing the Christmas message again this year will tell you that here is where joy will be found, here on holy ground. **The Miracle of Bethlehem** as more than facts of history: *“He will stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. They will dwell securely, for at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.”* We’re here at *the ends of the earth* to worship the *Shepherd of Israel* (Psalm 80:1) with love, peace and positive energy like no one else.

It’s by the miracle of God’s grace in your heart that **The Miracle of Bethlehem** softly brings the sure and certain conviction that all of this is *for you*. The Desired of Nations wants a home in your heart where *“This one will be their peace.”* Peace between nations or political parties or football teams is child’s play for the miracle Baby God-Man of Bethlehem. He brought peace between the holy God and sinful mortals who always argue and fight. **The Miracle** in the tiny town so **Unexpected, Brutally opposed** by church and state – was **Gloriously fulfilled**. Our Redeemer has come with God’s peace of life eternal with God. God’s heart wants to nestle softly like a baby next to yours. Ah, peace at last! Amen.