

The Bethlehem Description

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

I was raised in Saluda, North Carolina, a small mountain town in the western part of the state, partly in Henderson County but mostly in Polk County. Although the present population may not be too impressive, just around 600 people, the town is known for being at the top of the Saluda Grade, the steepest standard gauged railroad line in the United States. The elevation of our town is 2,103 feet above sea level.

There are certainly smaller towns and villages in the United States. The town of Impact, Texas, with a population of 25, claims to be the smallest township in Texas. Another small town that has 25 registered residents is the ranching and dairy community of Grenville, New Mexico. It appears that Centerville, Maine, the smallest town in New England, however, wins the prize of the smallest town with its 20 citizens.

We do not know how many people lived in the city of Bethlehem at the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus. With today’s Palestinian settlements, the town in the West Bank, south of Jerusalem, now boasts a population of around 30,000 people. Like the grain that grew in the many fields surrounding “Little Bethlehem,” here are a few thoughts that have been growing in the fields of my meditation.

The town of Bethlehem is labeled as a little city! When referring to Bethlehem hundreds of years before Christ’s birth, the prophet Micah described the village as “Bethlehem Ephratah . . . little among the thousands of Judah.” The title of the Christmas hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” then, is in agreement with the biblical record. This certainly reminds us that God can work in little places, in little things.

The town of Bethlehem is located in a little country! When the Canaan land was divided, the tribe of Judah was given the southern part of the country. Although a small region, the great city of Jerusalem was in its territory. Indicating that it would be a place of power and dominion, Moses prophesied, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh come” (Gen. 49:10). Of course, Shiloh, another name for Christ, came to Bethlehem of Judah.

The town of Bethlehem is lauded for a little cradle! Bethlehem was a little city in a little country, but its purpose was not little. Yes, the cradle was little, little for a little baby—baby Jesus. Bethlehem, however, was privileged to present “the Bread of life” to the world. The Bread of life, born in the house of bread, was placed in a manger, a feeding trough, that all could come and partake of Christ. Have you partaken of Him, dear friend?