

031207PM WOTB-08 From the Cradle to the Cross

From the Cradle To the Carpenter's Shop To the Cross

Title Slide

This evening I would like to take you on a Faith Journey. That is a journey that strengthens and encourages faith in God's Word and in God's Plan for each of us.

Tonight's journey starts at **THE CRADLE**. Near the Shepherd's Fields of Bethlehem is where we find that God speaks as no one else ever has in the History of Planet Earth. The Lord alone can tell us IN ADVANCE – what will come to pass in the future.

The Birth of Jesus is one of the most attested to events in human history. It is also one of the clearest prophetic events of all time. God wrote down literally hundreds of minute details that came to pass when Jesus was born. Over three hundred prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ have been literally fulfilled. There are those who say there are also over three hundred prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ. The conclusion of all these prophecies is that God speaks literally and those who literally study God's Word find His plan as it unfolds.

The Inn

That there was no¹ room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for him was on a cross. He sought an entry to the over-crowded hearts of men; he could not find it; and still his search—and his rejection—go on.

¹ Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

The Map of Bethlehem

From the naming of Bethlehem, to the family line of David -- the Scriptures wrote an address for Jesus coming to Earth that made His arrival the clearest example of Biblical Prophecy ever unfolded.

- **God told Eve thousands of years ago in the Garden of Eden that Christ's Birth would be unique as the "Seed of a woman":**
Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."
- **Christ's Birth would be as the Seed of Abraham:** Genesis 22:16-18 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."
- **Christ's Birth would be of the tribe of Judah:** Genesis 49:10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
- **Christ's Birth would be of the Seed of Isaac and Jacob** Numbers 24:17 "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.
- **Christ's Birth would be as the Son of David:** 2 Samuel 7:12-14 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.
- **The exact place of Christ's Birth would be in Bethlehem:** Micah 5:2 "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."

The Sheep

- **He would be born as no other through a Virgin Birth:** Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

- **He would be taken as an Infant to Egypt:** Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.
- **His birth would be followed by a Massacre of children:** Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the Lord: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more."
- **Boyhood in Nazareth:** Matthew 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." Jesus went from Bethlehem, to Egypt, as they returned when they heard Archelaus was in Judea they went on to their roots in Nazareth (Branch) Heb. nezer, the people there thought that was where Messiah would come from, but no one else thought that!

Nazareth Today 1-2

The next stop is at **THE CARPENTER'S SHOP**. Nazareth unfolds another whole series of truths about Christ's coming.

- **TRAINING:** The place He was raised was near the synagogue of Mary's father. Just three miles from Nazareth was Heli (or Eli) father of Mary who trained young Jesus fully in the Old Testament Scriptures. So great was Christ's training that the people called Him a Rabbi. Though the Jerusalem establishment did not recognize His training, the people around Him in Nazareth did.

Zippori Ruins 1

- **WORKING:** Shortly after the death² of Herod the Great, two significant events occurred in Galilee. One was the relocation of Joseph, Mary and Jesus from Egypt to Nazareth. The other was the selection of Zippori as the capital of Herod Antipas, the new Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. As one of the four surviving sons of Herod the Great, he was given a fourth part of the kingdom, which is why he was called "Tetrarch.". To Bible believers, it would appear providential that a ruler with a passion for building should chose a capital near the home of an important tekton (carpenter or builder) named Joseph, and his more important adopted son, who was also a tekton. *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him (Mark 6:3).*

² Tom McCall with Zola Levitt, *The Stones Cry Out*. Dallas, Texas: ZOLA, no date, pgs 59-63.

Nazareth was a town of 300 or so in Christ's time, it is only 3 miles from Zippori with 20 to 30,000 in Christ's time, was a capital city of Herod Antipas which he spent 30 years building. In fact it is a Divine coincidence that the biggest building project in Galilee was an hours walk from where Christ's home was located. It is also amazing that Jesus most likely worked with his father Joseph building Herod's 500 acre city. The public buildings, theatre, waterworks and so on – all needed skilled tektons (as Jesus was called in Mark 6.3).

Zippori Ruins 2

Interestingly enough, the construction took place during the time Jesus was growing up in the nearby town of Nazareth. It was just an hour's donkey ride from Jesus' home to Zippori. The Gospels don't mention Zippori, but they do indicate that Nazareth was a small town that both Joseph and Jesus were "tektons" by trade. It would not be unreasonable to assume that both Joseph and Jesus spent a considerable amount of time plying their trade in the bustling capital of Zippori. Joseph was a tekton, a builder who constructed things. Jesus learned the tekton trade.

- The Yeshiva³ in Zippori - There is an old Christian tradition, dating at least to Byzantine times, that Mary was born in Zippori. Israeli guide, Yossi Ashkenazi, stated that evidence from Talmudic sources confirms this, and that Mary's father was the headmaster of Zippori's Jewish school (Yeshiva). The Gospel accounts indicate that the Lord Jesus was often called "Rabbi" by His disciples and other people. The term Rabbi was not used loosely in Israel; it was only attributed to someone who had received the rigorous training in the Law of Moses provided by a Yeshiva. The small town of Nazareth was large enough to have its own synagogue, but it was certainly not large enough to have a rabbinic Yeshia. So it is reasonable to speculate that Jesus studied at the Yeshiva in Zippori where His own maternal grandfather was the headmaster. This conclusion helps us to fill in some of the gaps in the silent years of our Lord's life. LXX in Alexandria **SEPTUAGINT:** or LXX, from the story that 72 scholars (6 from each of the 12 tribes) working in 12 groups produced 12 identical Greek translations from Hebrew in 3C BC. Jesus may have memorized the Torah in His childhood as the Mishnah instructed devout young men to do!

The Temple

- **WORSHIPING:** From Nazareth Jesus walked with His family probably three or more times each year to Jerusalem (55 miles south of Nazareth). All men were to present themselves before the Lord three

³ Tom McCall with Zola Levitt, *The Stones Cry Out*. Dallas, Texas: ZOLA, no date, pgs 59-63.

times each year, and Joseph made sure that his growing family, soon to number at least seven children (Mark 6.3), made it up to Jerusalem. There they celebrated all the pictures of Christ's Coming with the faithful remnant of Israel's worshipers.

REMEMBER CHRIST'S BOYHOOD PASSOVERS. It was for **thirty years Jesus followed His family to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41) at each Passover season.** It was Jesus who as the oldest son⁴ was holding in his arms the lamb, which the group from Nazareth wished to sacrifice.

He must have handed over the lamb with a look of intense sorrow in his eyes. In his heart he seemed to be sharing the tragedy of the lamb, while a Levite's voice was repeating Isaiah's famous words. Join me in reading Isaiah's prophesy of Christ:

He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

When the lamb was handed back after being butchered and skinned for the Passover Meal, ***its body was slit down the middle and kept open by two pieces of wood*** -- IN THE FORM OF A CROSS.

The lamb slain, the cross of wood, the words from Isaiah –all these powerful pictures hinting of Christ's destiny must have filled the mind and heart of the boy Christ Jesus.

⁴ William Barclay, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Cleveland, Ohio: Collins World, 1977, p. 61.

- **LEARNING:** It was from the city of Zipori, Herod Antipas's capital that Jesus learned the language of the culture of His day. In fact Jesus reflects the culture of His day in His sermons recorded in the Gospels. The words of the theater (hupocrites) are used 17x in the entire New Testament, and only by Jesus. Herod's minister of finance had a wife named Joanna who later financed Jesus, and used her wealth for God's work. So Sepphoris is the town Jesus helped to build. Because of the great theater there, Jesus at least knew of the Greek culture. This theater seats 4500 people. Even the Greek work for actor (hupokrites) speaks of the culture, and Jesus used that word 17x, no one else uses it in the Bible!
 1. Matthew 6:1-5 Jesus said **don't use the trumpet**. That was exactly how the lead "actors" were announced to the stage.
 2. Matthew 6:16-8 **Hypocrites** like actors blackened their faces for tragedies don't you show off.
 3. Luke 19:11-15 certain man of noble birth went away to get a kingdom, delegation, returned and killed, this was Jesus drawing on current events and history to communicate to His culture. That was what Archaealaus had done after Herod the Great's death.
- **VISITING:** While living in Nazareth Jesus and His family also probably went to see His various relatives. We know from Scripture that Mary was related to Elisabeth and Zacharias who probably lived just outside of Jerusalem in Ein Kerem. They would have been seen at feast times. We also know that Mary's sister was named Salome and she had two sons James and John who lived and worked on the Sea of Galilee.

The final stop on our journey this evening is **THE CROSS**. Jesus was headed to the Cross from the cradle of Bethlehem. The Scriptures are too numerous to list but too powerful to pass by. For a few moments consider just three few key verses from God's Word.

John 3.16

Abraham

- **CALVARY WAS AT THE EXACT SPOT:** In Genesis 22 as we saw Isaac carrying the wood on his back – so Jesus carried His own Cross. As Abraham offered his only son, so God the Father offered His only Son. Even the location was the same, the elevation was the highest, and the picture is amazingly clear this side of Calvary.

- **CALVARY WAS AT THE EXACT MOMENT:** When Jesus was nailed to the Cross at 9AM the priests were tying the Passover lamb to the altar in the Temple. Six hours later, at precisely 3 PM as the call of the shofar from the top of the Holy Place was spreading across the gathered worshipers as the Passover lamb was slain—in an execution place outside the walls a few hundred yards away, the Lamb of God cried out – “It is Finished”.
- **CALVARY WAS THE EXACT EVENT:** In Daniel 9.24 we are told that Messiah would “be cut off” as a substitute, and not for Himself. So Jesus was “lifted up” as Moses foresaw 1,500 years earlier in Numbers 21 with the brazen serpent. David saw 1,000 years before Calvary that Christ would be “pierced” in His hands and feet, His garments were “divided” and His clothing was won by “casting lots” as Psalm 22 records. He was “bruised” as Isaiah saw 700 years before in chapter 53 “for our iniquities”.

Allow you minds⁵ to retrace the events of⁶ Passover the day Christ was crucified. Levites have just opened the doors of the Temple so that the crowds can enter to offer their sacrificial lambs.

At 9 AM – this was the specified time and **at that exact moment** three events took place.

1. While Israel’s high priest was tying the Passover lamb for the Nation to the Temple’s altar awaiting its sacrifice, and
2. Each head of household takes a knife and prepares to slaughter the lamb that must be sacrificed for his family –
3. **AT THAT VERY MOMENT**, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, **Jesus was being nailed to a cross to hang, and bleed**. For six hours both the lamb at the altar and Jesus the Lamb of God awaited death.

At 12 Noon as the thousands of individual lambs continue to be brought into the Temple, **the sky darkens**, and the crowds inside the Temple grow silent and pensive.

- ***While the stones of the Temple courtyard run red with the blood thousands of lambs and goats***, the Lamb of God spills His life's blood outside the city.
- While the father in each household slaughters a lamb for the sake of his family, ***God the Father slaughters His holy Lamb for the sake of all who would accept Christ's gift of forgiveness and eternal life.***

⁵ John Hagee, *His Glory Revealed*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pp. 9-11.

⁶ John Hagee, *His Glory Revealed*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999, pp. 9-11.

At 3 PM or exactly the ninth hour, the high priest ascended the altar in the temple and sacrificed the lamb for the Nation.

- At that moment, barely able to lift His blood-spattered face toward heaven, Christ's words thundered out over the city of Jerusalem in triumph, "***It is finished!***" (John 19:30).
- At that moment on Calvary's stark mountain, God the Father, the final High Priest of all creation, placed His holy hand on the head of His only begotten Son, allowing the sin of the world to descend upon Jesus.

What wondrous love!

What amazing grace! Never forget it.

Passover reminds us that the precious blood of the Worthy Lamb of God -- purchased our redemption.

Sing with me a song of worship to Christ our Passover Lamb:

**Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy,
Thou art worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory, glory and honor,
Glory and honor and pow'r.**

**For Thou hast created, hast all things created;
Thou hast created all things.
And for Thy pleasure they are created;
For Thou art worthy, O Lord.**