

Why Little Bethlehem?

Jeffersonville, Indiana, USA

December 28, 1958

1 It might look kind of funny, this morning, to wear my overcoat on the platform, but I was so happy to display that pretty overcoat this church give me. I seen Brother Neville up here the other day, with that nice suit on, how it fit him so nicely, and I thought, well, I.... It looked so nice, and the congregation talking about it, I thought, "I'll just wear my overcoat out on the platform."

You know, I believe we never grow up. We always.... And I don't want to grow up. How about that, Brother Luther? Never want to grow up, we just want to always remain children.

[Brother Neville says, "Brother Branham, I thought you had on one of those attires like these higher-classed ministers. I just glanced the corner of my eye, and I thought maybe you'd put on a robe."]

Complimentary to that nice overcoat.

2 Well, I'll say I was needing one awful bad, and it's the best one I ever had. And I sure do appreciate it. And Brother Roy Roberson (I don't know whether he is here this morning or not), he had something to do with the selecting of it. And it was really a fine selection, and we are very, very pleased to have it.

And so we are very pleased to be back in the house of the living God, this morning, and to enjoy these wonderful times of fellowship around His precious Word.

3 And it's soon now, if the Lord willing, I've got to go overseas. And I guess you seen it in the Businessmen's Voice, that I leave for overseas this next month. And we will be soliciting all the prayers of the people, that they will pray for us while we are away. It's seemingly that overseas my meetings seems to be better, because it takes better there. In America....

I was telling Brother Mercier that I listened to.... He gave me a record player, first, and it had the records on it, of some of my sermons. I knew then, if anybody ever listened to me, it would have to be God's grace to them, because I thought I could be a little better.

He is taping that, too. You can cut that part out, see. Or, he is holding his thumb down; I guess that's cutting it off.

4 But I tell you, I was so surprised. The poorest preaching I ever heard in my life, was my own, that's right, on the record. It made me so nervous, I couldn't even eat my dinner. I got sick, got away from the table, couldn't sleep that night.

And went down in Kentucky, with Brother Wood yesterday. Coming back, I said, "Brother Wood, I don't see how that I ever get a person to come and hear me speak. It's so poorly, such repeating myself, and, oh, grammar missing, and punctuation—there isn't any." I just.... I don't know. I said, "It encouraged me in one way, to know it has to be God, or nobody would come at all." That's right.

5 So I was speaking to Brother Collins. I suppose he is in the building. And so I said to him.... He come over, and was telling him about it. I said, "Brother Collins, honestly...." I said, "I'm pretty near thirty years old, as a preacher, and I certainly ought to know what a sermon is." I said, "That's the poorest I ever heard."

And he is a Methodist minister, and his brother is quite a man in the Methodist denomination. And he said, "Well," he said, "I will tell you, Brother Branham," said, "the punctuations and your sentences may not end right, and things like that, but," said, "did you ever think of that guy that preached on the day of Pentecost, that couldn't even sign his own name, his name was Peter?" Said, "I imagine that wasn't punctuated just right."

6 But, you see, what makes a man get his eyes on that: You listen to these radio broadcasts, and that's all wrote out, you see. And they can write it out and punctuate it, and things, because they're reading it.

I stood with Charles Fuller, preaching behind a trough about like that, for his platform. And everything that he said, he read it right down, number one, number two,

number three, number four, like that, till he got all right out, and timed it. And it was all censored, radio censored, and everything.

And with Billy Graham, I seen his, and so forth, where they just stand there and speak that, just read it just as fast as they can read it, and it's all ready, so I guess you would get the punctuation.

7 But the trouble with me, I couldn't even read it. If I wrote it, I'm sure I couldn't read it. So it's amazing grace, isn't it, to see what He can do for us. But I am grateful to starting in now, ending up of this old year, to start a new year.

I listened to a prayer line, and I certainly wasn't satisfied with the prayer line, either, to listen to that. It's the first time I ever heard myself back like that, for a message, and I certainly was surprised. The prayer lines isn't run right. No, I think it'll come to pass that, after a while, it'll be so that everybody will have to know everything about them before they'll believe. And beginning the first of the year, I want to change that, and just start the prayer line wherever God speaks to me, "This person is out of line," or "something wrong"; I will stop with him. Let the rest of them go on through, because you don't get enough through like that, see. The people know where they are, and who they are, and what they've done. But they find something that's not lined up just right with God, that's the time to stop on that one, say, "This is the one," see. So, I think maybe there'll be some alteration done, Brother Leo, since I heard them, and I trust that God will help us in the coming year.

8 Now, I believe that tonight they got services here at the Tabernacle. And I am to be up here on 62, with Brother Ruddell, tonight. I understand that they're going to have a watch service here. And Brother Ruddell had asked me for that watch service, but thinking maybe I would come back at the Tabernacle for that night, because I've always tried to be at the Tabernacle on New Year's Eve, and I wanted to come back down here with the brethren here. So I kind of compromised a little, and I will be with Brother Ruddell tonight, out on 62, at the old 62 Club that's been converted into a church. And then Wednesday night will be back here at the watch service. And then Thursday we leave for Chicago, and then on, and on to Philadelphia, and then overseas.

9 And this morning, we don't want to keep you too long, because we got interviews, and the services go on.

And, say, since the last prayer service here, oh, I am very grateful for the results that came forth from the last service of prayer. It was certainly a wonderful thing that our Lord can do when His people get together. "They that will call upon the name of the Lord, assemble themselves together," I believe is the way it is, "and pray, then God will hear from heaven."

So let us bow our heads, just a moment now, as we look to Him to give to us the inspiration needed for this message.

10 Lord, Thou has been our refuge and strength in all generations. Our forefathers, before us, trusted in Thee, and were not confounded. They believed in Thy Holy name, and they were brought forth as shining lights; and we, looking upon them, as the poet has said, "Footprints upon the sands of time; our partings leave behind us, footprints on the sands of time." Then we see that those who trusted in Thee, always, without one time failing, come out right. Though they went through many deep waters and great trials and persecutions, but yet, in the end, Thou did always bring them out more than conquerors, because it is Thy promised Word that You would do this.

And we would pray, today, that You would bless this little church. Bless its pastor, our good brother, Brother Neville, and his family. We ask that You will just be with him in this coming year, and will anoint him greater and bless him in every way. Strengthen the health of his family, the little ones that are coming up. Keep Brother Neville strong and healthy.

11 And bless this church and every member that's in it. The trustee board, how we love them as real gallant men of God; and the deacon board, they also are Thy gallant servants. And all the people that come here, we are grateful for them, Lord. Just does my heart good to know that this little old pond and weed patch, standing on the corner many years ago, has been made a lighthouse to the kingdom of God. And I pray, God, that it'll stand until Jesus comes. May many great souls that's been in here, Lord, come

forth at that day, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Grant it.

And as we open this blessed Word of Thine this morning, Lord, by turning back the pages to read from it a text, and we know that You alone can give the context. And we pray, God, that You will anoint Your Word, and may it go right to the hearts of the people that would do them good. Make believers out of unbelievers; and strengthen Christians; and heal the sick; and give courage to the discouraged; and get glory unto Thyself. In order to do this, Lord, circumcise the lips that shall speak and the ears that shall hear. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

12 Announcing a little text that fell on my heart since last Sunday. I was speaking upon the wise men coming to see Jesus, the Star they followed from the east to the west. While studying that, I hit a scripture, and then did not get to be here Christmas Eve because of some jail service, and so forth, I had to be at. I thought I would speak today upon the subject of: Why Little Bethlehem?

And I want to read out of the book of Micah, the prophet, one of the minor prophets, the 5th chapter and the 2nd verse. It reads like this:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall ... come forth unto me that ... the ruler ... be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth has been from ... old, from everlasting.

I had a spot on the Scripture there, is the reason I couldn't make out what the word was, at the time.

13 Of all of the places that is in Palestine! And there is so many great cities, and its localities, cities that are seemingly much more known in the lore of history, and better fortified, bigger cities. Why should God choose little Bethlehem to be the birthplace of His Son? There is many that are greater. And for instance, the historical lore of Jerusalem, the proud Jerusalem, the capital of all of it, and it's one of the largest cities of Palestine. And then we wonder why God would pick on that little bitty town of Bethlehem, for the birthplace of His Son.

But as the Scriptures has said, "What God determines to do, it will be done." And God foreordained it to be that way or it never would have been that way. And there.... The Scripture says, in the 15th chapter of Acts, that there is nothing by chance. God knowed everything. And it just didn't happen to happen that way. It just was that God made it that way.

14 And then when we in our little finite minds begin to think over, "Why would the great King of heaven choose a little place like that, instead of the capital?" Instead of some....

Even there was many places who had greater spiritual background than what Bethlehem did. For instance, some of the places like Shiloh. Shiloh was an ancient worship place of Israel, where they all came year by year to this great place where the ark of the Lord rested. And wonder why, then, that He wouldn't be born at Shiloh?

15 Then there was Gilgal, another great spiritual place of worship. Why wouldn't God let Him be born then at Gilgal?

And there was another one, Zion. Zion was on the mountain top. And we wonder why that Jesus would not be born then in Zion, because it's been a great historical mark of where the Lord has blessed His people in the ages.

And it looks like that maybe He would have chosen Zion, or Gilgal, or Shiloh, or one of the other great places where there had been great blessings and great teachings.

And there was other great cities, such as Hebron. That was the place for a man who was wanting a city of refuge, a place of safety. There was Ramoth-gilead, also another place of refuge where the people could come, which would've been very appropriate for him to be born.

16 And maybe, if I would have been thinking it, I would have brought Him over to Kadesh-barnea, for there was the judgment seat, and a place of refuge. Perhaps I would have brought Him over to that country for His birthplace, or maybe we would have chosen some of the other cities.

But, you know, I'm so glad that even just little insignificant things in the Bible

mean so much. I believe that it was Jesus that said this, that "You pass over ... do the weightier matters of the law, rather, but pass over the little things." And sometimes it's the little things that holds the big things together. But, all in all, the great cogs is turning just exactly the way God ordained them to turn. There'll never be one miss its place. God has foreordained all things, and it must hit just exactly to that place.

17 And when we get faith like that, and begin to think of who is behind all this. What is the main spring that's turning this great economy of God's? We find it's the Holy Spirit. Not left into the hands of men to do things; but in the hands of the Holy Spirit. And He is the main spring, that if He can get the rest of the instruments, it'll work just perfectly and keep exactly God's time.

And then we see that, and we wonder in our mind then, as we look at great things and how that we would have them; and then it gives us a lot of consolation today to think that, maybe if we are a little group of people, maybe if we are insignificant to the world and to the bigger churches of denominations, yet God uses those little simple things sometime.

18 For it is also written in the Scriptures, "Fear not, little flock, it's your Father's good will to give you the kingdom." What a consolation! I know that just as sure as Jesus had to be born in little Bethlehem, so will the little flock be the one that the Father will give the kingdom to, because it's written. And all Scripture is given by inspiration, and the Scriptures cannot be broken. They must be fulfilled. So it gives us that hope, to know that it'll be a little flock that will receive the kingdom, a little faithful flock of believers. I'm trusting to be one of those flock ... or, in that little flock, I should say.

And then we know the story, most all of us are acquainted with the story of how Israel came into Palestine by promise of God. And we know that the great Joshua was the one who divided each tribe their portion.

19 And it's certainly.... If we had the time of about from now until six o'clock tonight, to stay right on this subject, to line these things away, to get the real meaning out of them; which, we do not have—just about thirty, forty minutes. So we have to strike just the high points, trusting that the Holy Spirit, to you Bible readers, will place the rest of it into your heart, as we go along.

Did you know that those portions, how Joshua allotted them in Palestine, was given by inspiration? And those Hebrew mothers of those patriarchs, when the baby was coming forth and her in travailing pain, to deliver the child, she uttered the very spot that those patriarchs would settle down and be at the last days.

Talk about inspiration, this Bible is inspired! No matter how little, just every little scripture has such an outstanding thing in the great picture. All of it, every word is inspired, and on that hangs the destination of souls, for it's the Word of the immortal and eternal God.

20 And even those mothers, when the baby was born and she uttered their voice, placed them positionally where they would be in the promised land, hundreds of years later. And Joshua, not knowing that, yet by the same inspiration placed them exactly where they was to be.

And Joshua, dividing up, divided Judah's portion. If you'll notice on the map, it's geographically just west of the plain sea, a few miles south of Jerusalem, the capital. And when Judah was getting her part ... or, his part, rather, in the land (his province, we would call it), it's strange, but this little city was not even mentioned: Bethlehem. Yet it was there, because that Abraham.... Or, I believe it was Rebekah was buried at that place. But it must have been just a little village of some sort, because if you read Joshua 5, you'll find that there was a hundred and fifteen major cities under the domain of Judah, besides the villages and little towns; a hundred and fifteen cities, mentioned. And perhaps when it was divided up, that Bethlehem was so little, maybe just a little house or two, it wasn't even mentioned in the inheritance. And then we find out that it never actually come to be known....

21 The one that founded it was Caleb's son, whose name was Salma, and he founded it. The Bible said he was the father of it, which means he was the founder of Bethlehem. In other words, he must have moved in there and started some sort of businesses, and commercial, and the trading, and so forth, that grew it up. And later we will find out that

the real reason of it, that the whole lands was jealous of that little piece of land; which lays to the north, and east, and slopes a little to the south, on that spur. And it was the most fertile of all of Palestine. It was a corn belt and a wheat belt, and there were great olive orchards, and so forth, on it, in that part of Bethlehem ... or, Palestine, the end of Judah province.

22 And we find out that it was also became the home of the harlot Rahab. When Israel had passed over the borderline of the Jordan River, into Palestine, we are acquainted with the story of Rahab the harlot. Let's picture her this morning for a few minutes now, as a young lady, a beautiful young woman whose some misfortune in life had been forced in, being a pagan, had been forced into the life that she was living. And many times people are forced into the life that they live.

23 I was in the prisons the other night, to see a man who was taking a sentence. And I took him by the hand, and talked to him. And I said, "Why would you do such a thing as that?" And holding me by the hand, he begin to speak. And he was forced into what he was doing. I said, "Because that you permitted that to force you to that. You don't have to do that. No man has to drink." I said, "I am nervous, myself, but there is no need of that."

24 And this young woman, after she had got her first hearing of Israel, and of a God who was a God that answered prayer; not only a God to pray to, but a God that answered back. When she heard that there was a God of miracles, who could perform miracles, who dried up the seas and rained bread out of the heavens, her heart begin to tremble. And when she got the first message from two preachers that went over, quickly she accepted it with all her heart. And there was a scarlet cord bound at her window, for a protection of her house, because that she had received the message.

25 I might add here: Did you know she typed the Gentile church? She was a Gentile, and she was a type of the Gentile church, when they heard the message. We were all out in spiritual prostitution, committing spiritual fornications against the God of heaven, in all kinds of stuff, all kinds of denominations and religions. But when we heard that there was a God that still lived, that could perform miracles, quickly we received the message.

There was applied the blood of the Lord Jesus, which made the scarlet cord. And to keep from going into detail, you know how she hung it from her window, publicly; the blood was displayed publicly. That's the way the blood has got to be displayed, publicly hanging from the outside of the wall, to show that, on the inside, something had taken place. That's the way the true believer in Christ is this morning; on the outside is the display of the blood of the Lord Jesus, that shows something took place on the inside.

26 And through this, God looked down when the wrath fell and the trumpets begin to blow, God seen that scarlet cord hanging there as a memorial. It's always pleased Him to pass over the blood. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." He saw it. And when the shaking and the Holy Spirit rumbled the earth and shook down them walls—some twenty-feet thick—not one rock fell where that cord was hanging. Shows the protection of a true God to a true believer, no matter what state you're in when He finds you, if you'll just accept that scarlet cord. It weaves through the Bible.

27 And then we see her when she was taken in as one of the Israelites. She fell in love with a man, which was a captain and a prince in Judah. He was a captain of the Israelite armies. His name was Salmon, just like the king, Solomon. And he was a captain, and she become in a great romance with this captain, which was the prince of Judah. And finally she married him. And when the estate was settled up for the Israelites, she and her beloved husband lived in Bethlehem.

28 Now you begin to see it open, haven't you? See, it begin to open as we see that in Bethlehem she lived, being a Gentile bride, to a Jew. Why? Because she believed in a miracle-working God. And as.... Look what she come from, from being out of a house of ill fame, of prostitution; through her conversion and through her unfailing faith in God, it brought her from a prostitute house, to a beautiful home in Bethlehem. What a difference!

That's the way it does all of us. From a house of unbelief and flusterations, and immoral acts, and everything; to a place, position in Christ, which is most beautiful. From the ridiculous to the sublime, that's the difference that it makes through our

conversion. And did you see, she married a prince of the house of Judah, a captain? That captain represented Christ, took to Himself a Gentile bride. From the lowest of lowest, to the principal and best place in the land, as we will get to it later in our message, to prove that it was nothing else could be but that. They're a type of the Gentile church.

29 And we find out they had a lovely home in Bethlehem, as Salmon had established it, and it would become a great place, and the fertile lands. And how beautiful it is to think of that great wheat country there, that it would be the bread place of the world. And, it is true! No wonder Jesus had to be born there, because He was the bread of life! There is where all the nation come for their wheat, all the nations come for their corn. For, it was in Bethlehem, that had those fertile lands. And, you see, this little bitty thing, just saying, "Oh, it was the province of wheat," yet that meant something. And you see how the Gentile prince ... or, this Jewish prince taking His Gentile bride back up to Bethlehem, for a settling down place, a place to live, where there was plenty of bread.

We find out, through this great romance and great obedience to faith, through the harlot Rahab, she gave birth to a son to Salmon, and his name was Boaz. And we all are acquainted with another great story tying in this link here now. And Boaz was born in Bethlehem, from Salmon and the harlot Rahab.

30 And we find out that years later, after Naomi had left the country and gone over to sojourn with the Moabites, and when they had evilly mistreated her and she had got out of fellowship with the rest of the believers, and associated herself in a backslidden condition, in another land, among another people. In otherwise, she had left the true believing church, to go out into the world for a little while, to join some social church, who believed in just anything would be all right. In there, she lost her husband.

And it don't have to be every time in physical death. You might lose him in a spiritual death, or lose your wife. Better stay on good grounds! You had better stay where you know you are covered by the blood, regardless of what the rest of them looks like, how big they are, how fine of spires they have on their churches, or how the big bells ring. You better stay where the blood covers the sins of the people. You might lose one another, and, above all, you might lose the Lord Jesus and be barred out.

And we find out then that after her sons was gone (she lost both of them), and she returned back because there was no revival spirit in the city, at the time.

31 Oh, how I would love to rest here for a few minutes! How I'd like to pick it up right here and show you! Regardless of how many of the church has gone back, stay under the blood; that's the place to abide. In or out, up or down, thick or thin, wherever it may be, stay under the blood. But Naomi, she thought it would be better to go over and join another group, because they were having troubles, spiritual bread wasn't there. But God will restore it back, "I will restore, saith the Lord." Stay in the field where it comes from.

32 So, we find that she begin to long to go back, because they heard that a great revival had broke out. And if you noticed, Naomi returned in "barley season," the Bible said, just at the time of the harvest; in other words, when there was a great revival going on—spiritually applying it. She returned just in that season. Nothing left; she had nothing.

And Orpah, one of her sons' wives, when she come to look upon what she had to sacrifice, being a type of the modern church, "If I have to go over there, I'll have to get away from my dances, I'll have to get away from my big time, and my social gatherings." Then she just wept and kissed her mother-in-law, and returned back.

33 But here is a beautiful picture: There was one named Ruth, with her, another daughter-in-law, which was a type again of the Gentile bride, who kissed her mother-in-law, and said, "I will forsake everything. I'm going with you. Let your people be my people. Let your God be my God. Wherever you die, there I will die. Where you are buried, there I will be buried." That's it. That's what God wants. It's not that borderline, half way; but an absolute, full surrender to the kingdom of God. She kissed her.

And so Naomi said, to discourage her, said, "You had better go back to your people. I'm old, and there is no more sons in me." And the law was that she had to wait for a son. And said, "Then there is no more in me. And if I would have a husband, and I'd have a son, you would be too old to marry him, so you just return back to your people."

But Ruth said, "I will not go back!" Faith—rooted, grounded, perfect faith—had

come into Ruth's heart. She said, "I'm going right with you." And she clave to her, held onto her. "I'm going to be where you are." I like that.

34 And we're acquainted with the story as it goes on, that this great Boaz, which was the lord of the harvest, was in harvest at the time, and was a kinsman to Naomi. And when she found Ruth out there in a little mission, gleaning, every little straw that she could pick up, that had some wheat on it, she held to it, for it was life. Boaz, being the lord of the harvest, he commanded that his reapers would drop a handful now and then, for her; and she would pick it up, and with joy. And she shucked out a great apronful of it, that day. And when Boaz, the lord of the harvest, came out and looked upon Ruth, and seen her faithfulness, he fell in love with her.

Watch Boaz represent Christ. Where was he at? Bethlehem. Where was Ruth come to? Bethlehem. Where was she gleaning at? In Bethlehem. See all those spiritual significances to this here, the background to this great scene that's taking place, God knowing it in the beginning?

35 And she begin to question to her mother-in-law, what she must do. And finally Ruth was married to Boaz, a Gentile married to a prince again, in Judah, and settled down and lived in Bethlehem. "Oh, thou little Bethlehem, ... aren't you the least among all the principal cities of Palestine; but it's pleased God whose knowing and going forth was from old, from the beginning, to have His Son born there."

He knows all things, and He works it just to be right. And there Ruth married Boaz. And when Ruth and Boaz was married; if we had time to go into the great story there, which was one of the greatest love scenes of all ages, when Ruth and Boaz were married. And you remember....

Let's just stop for a minute here. Just too good to pass over!

36 Ruth was a Gentile. She had no inheritance with the Jew, just like we Gentiles had no inheritance. So, Naomi was actually the one to inherit. So, she had lost all of her first estate; all of her goods had been sold at public auction. Therefore, she was ... been excommunicated, and had gone away.

Now when she came back, there was only one person who could ever redeem her lost inheritance; that was a kinsman right next to her. And Boaz knew this, so he had to work some way to get this Gentile girl for a wife. And what did he have to do? He had to buy all of the estate of Naomi, in order to get in this estate, which Ruth was part of the estate of Naomi. And the only man that could buy it, would have to be a person that was kinfolks, near kinsman. That was the law of redemption.

37 And the only way that Christ could ever buy the estate of the backslidden Israel, was to become a Kinsman. Only way God could redeem the human race, God Himself had to be made flesh. And Jesus was God made kinfolks to the human race. He was Emmanuel. He become kinfolks. He took upon Him, not the form of angels, but the form of a servant who washed the feet, and lived.... And the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but He didn't even have a place to lay His head. He eat, He drink, He cried, He laughed, just like other men. And He was God, not a prophet. He was God because He had to be kinfolks in order to redeem the lost human race. So, Boaz, in this great type at Bethlehem; look where this Kinsman was born to the human race—had to be.

38 And then when this great Boaz redeemed her, he had to make a public showing that he had redeemed all of her lost estate. So he went to the gate of Bethlehem, that little city again, and he called the elders of the city, and he let them know that that day he had bought everything that Naomi had lost. Everything that she lost, he bought it back. And he kicked off his shoe and threw it up before the people, as an ensign, "And if there is anyone has any reason to say something, say it now, for this is a memorial that I have redeemed everything that she lost."

39 Oh, blessed be the name of the Lord! And when our Kinsman came, Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, He stood on top of Golgotha, and lifted Him up between the heavens and earth, as a memorial that He had redeemed everything that the human race had lost in the fall. How can men despise divine healing and the powers of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, when a public ensign was made at Calvary, that "I have redeemed the whole human race and everything that they ever lost," redeemed our

soul, redeemed our body, redeemed everything that we lost in the fall. Our Kinsman Redeemer came and was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and offered up the ensign, and said, "It's finished." What's finished? Everything is finished. We're just walking right into our inheritance. And as the days go on, we're walking closer and closer.

40 Boaz and Naomi.... After being married for some time, they brought forth a son, which added more to the lineage, and that was Obed. And he also brought forth his son, which was Jesse. And Jesse had eight boys.

And it was the great prophet Samuel who came with the cruse of the oil, the great prophet who went to Jesse, and said, "God has chosen one of your boys to rule and serve My people." And it was out in the backside of the field, in a little shepherd yard, where the little ruddy, scrawny-looking boy was brought: David, the youngest. And Samuel poured the anointing oil on him, in the presence of all of his brothers and them which stood about, and proved that God had anointed him king. Where was that at? Bethlehem. Glory to God in the highest! No wonder, Bethlehem, where he was anointed king.

41 And it was in Bethlehem, where David was born. And his greater Son, Jesus, was also had to be born in Bethlehem, because there is such a close knit between the two, his Father and Son. Not only was this great Son only the Son, He was the root and the offspring of David, He was even before David, He will be after David, He was for everlasting, from everlasting on. But according to the flesh, and all the things to be fulfilled, He was the Son of David. He was to be born years later in this same Bethlehem, this little forsaken city.

42 But all the time, in there, do you notice, there is working a great mighty mystery that no one seemed to understand. That's the same thing it is in God's Bethlehem today: There is working a mystery sign, but no one seems to understand it. It's something that goes over the top of the heads of the people. They don't seem to get it. No matter what's done, or what's said, and the mysterious part of the things that's done, the people will say, "Oh, well, I guess it's all right," and go on, but they don't understand it. They can't catch it. They can't grasp it. And that's what God was doing in Bethlehem in Judea. He's working, all these little things moving up, to come to one great head.

43 David, oh, when he was anointed king, as a little boy, he was ruddy to look up at, but he must have been something in him that looked real to God. The little bitty, the smallest of the family. The rest of the boys, great big fine men, would look good in the robes, and a crown on their head. But God showed what He looks at: not the outward appearance, but the inside of a man. He looked at his heart; He knew what was in David's heart, no matter how the crown looked on him. He knewed He was finding Him a man that was a man after His own heart, which David would be a man after His own heart. That's why He poured the anointing oil ... or, had it poured upon David. Which, the name David means "beloved."

44 And it was well represented in Jesus, the Beloved One, years later; the Son of David, who was to come to fulfill all things that had been promised. This little city of Bethlehem was where this taken place. And it was on them same little Judean hills where David had herded his sheep, many years later, that the angels sang their first noel on the hills of Judea, overlooking Bethlehem. The first noel, "Unto Thee is born in the city of David, Christ the Lord." When angels first made their appearance to sing, it wasn't at Jerusalem, the big church; neither was it at Gilgal; or neither was it at Shiloh, where they'd had the religious denominational worship all the time. But it was in little Bethlehem, where the Spirit of God had been moving in a mysterious way, bringing forth something. It was there.

45 It was there where Christ had to come. It was there. It was in that same little city, with a King born, that a mother, virgin, brought forth her first born son. It sheltered, and housed in its little fortress, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Where not only did Samuel come to pour out the anointing oil, but God poured out upon Him, and upon the world, Christ the Lord. The angels heralded His coming and sang to the shepherds on the hillside, who followed David the king, years before. See the mystery of God, how great it is?

He was born in this great wheat belt, which one wheat comes forth the basic

principles of life. And He was the bread of life. "I am the bread of life. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and shall never die or come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life."

46 Bethlehem! The name beth-el. B-e-t-h, beth; beth in the Hebrew word means "house." E-l stands for Elohim, its abbreviation, Elohim means "God." B-e-t-h, beth; E-l, E-l is Elohim, which is God, the House of God, where the bread of life is laying. E-l, h-e-m, finish it out and bring back your l again with your e, means a "loaf of bread," in the Hebrew, El-hem. E-l is God, Elohim. B-e-t-h is... b-e-t-h is "house." E-l is Elohim abbreviation. Then E-l, e-m is "bread." What was He? The house of the bread of God. "The House of God's bread." House, beth; Elohim, God; El, e-m, bread. "The house of God's bread," means Bethlehem.

47 Where could He have been born anywhere else but that? But it was hid to everybody but that prophet; he said, "Out of Bethlehem shall come Him." They was looking in Jerusalem; they was looking in all the big Shilohs; they was looking everywhere. But He come from Bethlehem, because it was the house of God's bread of life. He is God's breadbasket to the world. There He was, born in Bethlehem. He could be born nowhere else.

There could be many great things, as I was studying this week of the different spiritual aspects to that, why He must be born in Bethlehem. When I hit these few places, the Holy Spirit just caught me away, and I said, "O God, that's sufficient. I see it now."

He could not be born nowhere else but Bethlehem. It was the place of the bread of the nation. It was the bread of all the house of Israel, come from there. And He was the bread of life that come down from heaven, the spiritual Manna; has to come from Bethlehem, the bread line, the place where bread lays. Bethlehem, the baking of the bread. Now, Jesus being the bread of life, "The man may eat thereof," He said, "and never die."

48 Another great event that I wouldn't forget to call, that was when David was in his worst of time, when he was a fugitive. He had already been anointed; he knowed what he was to be. He was to be king, God said so, and yet he was hated. He was standing in between two great deep fires; here was the Philistines on one side, after him, here was Saul on the other side. And he was a man without a nation.

Just as the church stands today, the true living church of God, without a denomination or anything else. She stands alone, but yet she's had the anointing poured on her. She knows what she is.

49 How in the world can it ever come to pass, the devil on both sides, driving at David? He had taken refuge in strongholds in the wilderness and in caves, trying to hide out, with a little band of faithful warriors, just a few believing like him. But those men believed God, that that would be the king.

So is the believers today, who is hid out from place to place, but yet they know who is coming to be King. I don't care who is going to be president, we know He is coming. And it looks farther away than it ever did, when science is trying to overrule, and say, "They can build a man, they can do this, and they can take a rabbit and take the pollen and make another rabbit, and so forth," trying to disprove God's Word. Yet, there is a people who believe God, who stands just as pat as they ever did. No matter what comes or goes, they still believe God. God is right! They hold to God's unchanging hands. In the midst of battle, in the midst of tears, in the midst of sickness and death, and everything, they still hold to God's unchanging hand. They know that He is coming King.

50 People today laugh and make fun of them, and call them, "holy-rollers." Call them everything they want to, but them warriors of God stands faithful at the post of duty. Might call them a "healing group," you might call them a "bunch of fanatics," or whatever you wish to; they hang to that King. They know He is coming in power. Though they take His name in vain, scoff and make fun, and call the people who believe Him, "outcasts, bunch of backwash," that doesn't bother them a bit; they stay true at the post of duty.

51 Those warriors that was with David stayed right by his side. If a Philistine come up, he had to fight. Whoever it was, they were picked on, every side. Poor David, in his

mind, all confused; he thought, "How can it be, Lord?"

You know, leaders sometimes go through things that the congregation don't know what they're going through. When you think of promises God has made, then why don't it come to pass? They don't tell their congregation, they don't tell the people they associate with, but there is many flusterations in the heart of a real leader.

52 David sitting there, his throat burning him, it was in the middle of summer. The Philistines was taking advantage of that split between David and Saul. And Saul looking for David everywhere, and the Philistines, also, and the Philistines looking for the Israelites. Talk about a time of confusion; just about like it is now. David taken refuge in this little place, in this little shelter, everywhere he could get to, the little strongholds that he could hold into. Then he got up on the mountain, on that hot, middle of the summer, when the heat was tremendous, his throat parching, and flusterations and fears in his heart, and wondering, "O God, how could it be? You poured that oil upon me, not because I chose myself, but You chose me. Why did You call me from herding the sheep out yonder, and told me You would give me this to serve Your people, and here You've got me between the fires everywhere?" That was going through his heart.

53 He sat up on the hill and he looked down, and there the Philistines had come in and garrisoned right in Bethlehem, his little home. Then, his little city was under government control of the enemy. Not only that, but his own father's house, Jesse's house, was under bondage to the Philistines. There was his own nation, his own church, against him. Here was the enemy he was fighting, here is the church people he was fighting; not because he wanted to, but because he was forced to do it.

Many times we are forced to do things and say things that we don't want to say (a real spiritual leader), but he's forced to do it. He has to take his side and show his colors. "I'll take the way with the Lord's despised few," said the song writer.

54 So there he was on that hot day, no doubt, walking back and forth, and looking down through that long valley, of about twenty-five miles down there, and back. There was his own father's house in bondage to the Philistines. There was Saul just across yonder, and here come this one, sitting right between, see, to take sides. Seeing the great time that Israel was all broke up, the church broke up in different denominations, as to say. Here was David standing back here, not knowing what to do, and yet knowing that on him rested the anointing. They knew that anointing was there. They knew David was going to be king. Hallelujah!

55 We know who is going to be King. Doesn't matter who is going to be president. I know who is going to be King. He will be King. And I know it takes something to stand. But God help me to shut my eyes to denominations and everything else, and look to that spiritual sight yonder, that He is the coming King. I'll serve Him. If it's death, let me die. If it's my family, it's my loved ones, if it's my denomination, it's everything: Let me serve Him. I'll stay to Him. That's the warriors of God, like was with David, that had their hands on their sword, walking any time. That's the way God's warriors walk, ready!

56 The enemy says, "You have to take a little drink, to be sociable."

"I touch not your unclean things." Amen! There's the enemy. There's the warrior!

"Oh, why don't you renounce that old holy-roller stuff you believe?"

"I believe God. I'll stand true!" There you are. There's the warriors.

"Oh, there's no such a thing as divine healing!"

"That's what you think. I know better," see.

"There's no such a thing as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Them days has passed on."

"That's what you think. I've already received it; you're just too late to tell me anything about it."

57 They knew the anointing was on that little old ruddy-looking fellow, and they knew he was going to be king.

But David, in his own mind, was flusterated. I can imagine.... Just watch him a minute: goes back out there and sits down, and looks down there, and thinks, "My own beloved city, Bethlehem! Look at it there, where the great things of God has taken

place, where my father's father's father's father was born; where my great-great-great-great-grandmother yonder uttered in the time of the birth of Judah, from whose tribe I'm from, that yonder laid something supernatural. She uttered their place, and there Joshua placed that somehow in there. And through there come all these things here. It's got to be. I was a shepherd, and You poured oil on my head. You said I'd be king. I believe You. Amen."

Then he goes back and looks down there, and thinks, "Well, way down yonder in my little city, where I was born, that little group where I was with, them good old days."

58 It would be better if the Methodists looked back to their good old days, when they were few and far between in little schoolhouses out here in America, falling under the power of God, and throwing water in their face. It would be better for you Baptists to look back to where you come from, too, and the rest of them. You Pentecostal, look back where you come from. That's right.

In the heat of the battle here, David begin to think, "Oh, I can remember them nights I laid out yonder on that hillside. I remember when I watched them stars, how they moved up yonder, and how God talked to my little boy heart. I can remember when I got so in the Spirit one day, looking at the clouds and the shady green pastures, till I screamed out in the Spirit, and singed:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadows of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;...

59 Oh, my, here he was right in the jaws of death right then, on both sides. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Them good old days when the Spirit was with me, when God was with me; I sang His praises, I enjoyed Him.

"I remember one time that a lion come up, one morning, and got one of my sheep. And the Spirit of God came upon me, and I went out and grabbed him and cut him to pieces. I remember that deliverance. Oh, I can remember that evening just before the sun went down, a bear come in and got one, and I killed him. Them great deliverances!"

"I remember when I sang His praises in my childhood days, when I herded my sheep. O God, take me back to that place. Take me back to my first love. Take me back and give me back my shepherd's staff. Give me back my herd of sheep. Let me alone back there, to worship You."

60 Sometimes we think that, but we're in the heat of the battle. Something's got to be done. We were boys once; we're grown-up men now. The fight is on. I remember when the sawdust boiled up on the floor, and the people screamed and shouted, and you couldn't get around the place nowhere here, for people, but it's not that way today. The battle is on. Oh, it's not William Branham, the little boy preacher, anymore; you got to produce something. Yes, sir, there has got to be something different. The time is on. The battle is on. The heat is on. The time to be delivered, the people, everyone's found written in the book. Now the time has come.

61 David and all his flusteration, walking back and forth, and thinking, "Oh, this hot day! Whew, oh, it's so hot! Oh, Saul might come from this way, the Philistines from this way; armies around everywhere, and here we are sitting in the mouth of a cave! And, yet, the anointing oil on me. How can it be, O God, how can it be? Oh, I wish I had a drink!" Then his mind goes back, to way down there by the gates of Bethlehem, there was a well. There just was no water like that water.

You know, Palestine has some bad water. They have evil waters, and they have even to black-water fever, and stuff, in them. And a lot of it is alkaline water, which would kill you.

62 But Bethlehem is the water seat of the province, too. There was no water like Bethlehem had! David used to think, "When I take my sheep and start out of a morning, I'd go by that old well and drink. Oh, how cool and how sweet, and how it quenched the thirst!"

Now his throat is a going, yet anointed, "Oh, if I only had a drink of water!" Now his warriors.... And he screamed out, in his despair, "Oh, if someone would bring me a drink again from that old well yonder at Bethlehem!" Oh, after dreaming of all of his childhood

days and the victories, and see him in the place where he is sitting here between the fires, he screamed, "Oh, someone could bring me water from Bethlehem!"

63 Now, his warriors could not interpret his thinking, but, brother, they loved him with all that was in them. The least of his desires was a command to them. Three of his mighty warriors pulled their swords, slipped off from the camp, and cut their way, twenty-five miles. David, in their going, no doubt wondered, "Where they at? What have they done? Where did they go to? Did they know they're jeopardizing their life?" They're right in the jaws of death, through a twenty-five-mile line, laying in ambush everywhere, and the swords a flickering, and the shields a blasting; but their man, their brother that they believed that would be king, desired a drink.

64 Oh, brother, I wonder if the warriors today are willing to cut their way through formalism, doubts and unbelief, to refresh in the presence of the Lord, His desires? "The least of Your desires; if it's Africa, India, if it's to the street, wherever it is! The least of Your desires, Lord, is my command. Death don't mean a thing to me. Popularity, what I am, what I will be, means nothing, Lord. It's to fulfill Your desires." That's the warriors that's standing by the side of Him. "If they call me 'holy-roller,' if my name is scandalized, if they kick me in the street, that doesn't matter. Your desire is my command." That's the real soldier.

65 What did they do? They fought their way through until they got to that well. They dipped the bucket of water out. And here they come back, fighting, cutting their way from right to left, until they come into the presence of David. Said, "Here you are, my lord!" Oh, my! What? A man that was disgraced, a man that was hated by the church, a man that was hated by the king, a man that was hated by the Philistines, a man that was hated everywhere, nearly. But a little group that followed him, they knew that he was the coming king.

66 Today, I know we sing great songs, we build great churches, we have great anthems and everything, we praise to Him like that, but Jesus said, "In your hearts you are far from me, for you teach for doctrine the commandments of men." Let the Holy Spirit come in and do something in the church, showing the presence of Jesus Christ, they'll kick you out the door. "In vain do you worship Me. They worship, but in vain do you do it, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men."

But there's warriors who believe Him, there's warriors who stand by it, with a spiritual understanding, like in little Bethlehem yonder, see. Sure, it was.

67 David picks up this bucket of water, he looked at it, and the Bible said that he poured it upon the ground. Said, "Lord, be it far from me that I would drink that, because these my warriors has jeopardized their life, to go yonder and to bring this water to me. It's the blood of men. I cannot do it." And this sweet water that they jeopardized their lives and broke through the enemy line to go yonder and get, David poured it upon the ground as a free-will offering to the Lord. It wasn't mean; it was only fulfilling the Scriptures.

68 Because, although Jesus, from Bethlehem, is the bread of life, He also is the water of life. Sure, it is. And what did He do? He was represented in both David and warriors; because He was the King, and He was the warrior who came and broke through the enemy's lines. Amen! Conquered death, hell and the grave, poured out His own blood, that John 3:16 might be fulfilled!

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but would have eternal life.

And that He give not the water it represented, but He was the water, a perishing people, that might have life. How did He do it? Through His own blood, by pouring it out; not spilling it, that's an accident. He poured it out freely at Calvary, after He broke through every line of the enemy, and poured out His life blood, that He might be the breadbasket to the world.

And the fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
When sinners plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

69 That's why He was born in Bethlehem. That's why He had to come, because it was the bread center, the bread of life. It was the water center. What is it? The waters of life. And in Jesus was both bread of life and waters of life, therefore He had to come and be born in Bethlehem. "...thou Bethlehem of Judea, are you not the least among all the great princes? You're just an ordinary little preacher, you're just a little fellow; but out of you shall come ... the ruler which is from old, everlasting to everlasting, His foregoing has been going forth from ever, and from everlasting to everlasting."

That's why He was born in Bethlehem of Judea. It cradled Him. And, my brother, the place He wants to be cradled today is in your own being, your own heart, that He might display from you, the waters of life to a perishing people, and the bread of life to a starving people. He is the bread and water of life, which is the two essential things to a man's living, is bread and water. It's promised, sure.

70 Let us bow our heads just a moment, and in doing so, I want your undivided attention. Have you ever been to Bethlehem, this morning? If you have never been to Bethlehem....

It was called Ephratah of Bethlehem, too, Ephratah of Bethlehem. Ephratah means "the root," come from the word h-e-m-p, hemp, means "the root." And the old ancient district there was called Ephratah, which means, "it's the beginning of life." Christ said, "If ye abide in Me, I am the vine and ye are the branches." He is the root of all life.

If you've never come to Bethlehem, Ephratah, Bethlehem, come this morning and receive Him as your Saviour, and He will forgive you of your sins. Will you raise your hands to Him, and say, "Lord God, be merciful to me now, I now here come to Jesus, with all my heart. I come to Your Bethlehem, the water and bread of life. I now accept Him as my personal Saviour"? The Lord bless you, young fellow back there. The Lord bless you. God bless you, little one.

71 Is there another, say, "I now come; nothing in my arms. I stand, thirsting, my throat is dry. I'm wondering where I can go and find real life. I'm wondering. I've joined churches...." God bless you, sister. "I have joined churches, I've done everything I know to do, Brother Branham, but I've never yet touched that real life-giving resource. I now come, Lord, to receive it." He is here for you. Would you just raise your hand, say, "It's me, Lord. I'm the one that's standing, and needy"? The Lord bless you, while we pray.

72 O Lord God, this little broken-up message brought from the Scriptures, though, in all its symbols, that You put it there; maybe it's hid from the eyes of the wise and prudent, and be revealed to babes such as will learn. How that little Bethlehem, the least of all of them! How did the prophet say that? "Art thou not least among all the princes?" But it so pleased God to bring from that little insignificant place, the Ruler of Israel. Lord God, out of a little group of people that's washed by the scarlet line of blood of the Lord Jesus, You shall bring forth to that group, somewhere, Lord, across this world, Christ again, that will rule all nations with a rod of iron.

I pray Thee, Father God, that You'll be merciful to each of us who are present now, and may we come to Your Bethlehem. "O come, all ye faithful," we've been singing, "come to Bethlehem." Lord, let them see that it's not go to a little city yonder, that was once in a symbol; but go to the reality, Jesus Christ, God's bread and water of life.

And these who raised their hands, receive them into Thy kingdom, just now, Lord, for it's by their faith that they receive Him, it's by faith that they raised their hands, and it's by faith that I believe that You receive them. Keep them, Lord, at Bethlehem, where they'll never stray or go away like Naomi; but may, if the times gets hard, may they stay right at Bethlehem. It will be better, by and by. Grant it, Lord.

73 Now I pray that You'll be merciful to those who are sick and afflicted. There are those here, Lord, who need Thy healing touch. O Lord, You did restore Bethlehem to all of her former glory. You restored her in the time of the depression, when she was sick. You brought her right back, and brought Naomi at barley season. And now, Father, we pray that You will bring every Naomi, and everyone that's in here that's in need. I pray, God. O Lord, it's just barley season, the great barley loaf that was seen, come rolling down the hill, into the camp of the enemy. I pray, God, that You will bring that great barley loaf into this building now, and that it may be the atonement for the sickness of the people, as well as the sin, and heal every person that's in Divine Presence.

I just feel, Lord, maybe it's just my own personal feeling, but I feel that You're near, the nearness of You now in here. I believe that You're here. And I say not this because of the people. Thou who knows the heart of man, I pray, Lord, that somehow they'll catch the vision, this morning, like those warriors, that Your great omnipotence, Your great power, Your great presence, what You are, the Son of God, the King, the anointed One, that You're in the midst of us; they'll catch the glimpse of it, in their souls, and be healed of their afflictions. I pray this prayer, as I place it to them, in the name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son. Amen.

74 I believe God, all His words, believe that every part of His Word is divinely inspired. I believe that He isn't "I was," but He is "I AM," an ever-living presence. I believe that right now, in the midst of the people here.

You who raised your hand, find you a church, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, calling upon God, washing away your sins, believing that His soon coming is to.... He is to appear in His second coming.

I also believe that His presence is here to heal the sick, to make well those who are needy. You don't have to necessarily just be one-by-one prayed for. I proved that the other night, to people, that I just wanted to show them what would happen.

75 There was a certain young man, who is sitting, looking right at me now, that had been in bed for days. His throat was swelled so bad till he couldn't even eat nor nothing, his fever was way high. And he had told his father and mother, "Send, get Brother Branham come pray for me." And somehow they didn't want to bother me, because I was busy. And just something led me to go to their house.

While sitting there, they tried to bring the young man a plate, had real soft egg and something another, and some soft beans mashed up, and he was trying to swallow them. He would wallow them, take a finger and mash them; his teeth was all swelled out and puss running out of them. And he would try to mash it like that, with his finger, and try to get it down his throat like that. And he made about a bite or two, and he just couldn't go no farther, pushed it back.

76 I was sitting there, without a prayer; there is just a little something. You can't tell everybody what's going on. No. I said, "Lord, Lord, it's close to the end of the year now. There is a coming on, a new something. Let me.... Lord, is this it, is this it?" And as soon as I begin to say that, and say now, in my heart now, "I know You're here," the young man reached and got another bite, and another bite, and another bite, and another bite, and cleaned up his whole plate, and got in his car and went away.

Oh, He's God, see, His presence, His presence. They don't.... It just lets Him be present.

77 The other day when they taken this last, latest picture.... When I seen Him standing there, I looked at it and I thought, "Well, I've seen the Angel of the Lord on those, and I know it was wonderful." But when He taken this one! Then about three o'clock in the morning, He woke me up and told me what it was to be, and explained it all to me, and how the armor and everything, showed me the things on it I had never seen. I went in and get it, and looked at it, and there it was. I had never seen it before. Oh, what a feeling that brought to me, a consolation, to know that He is present!

He is here, just His presence. And the presence of the Lord was there to heal the sick. The presence of the Lord is here to heal the sick. The presence of the Lord is here to bring conviction to sinners. The presence of the Lord is in the midst of His people, and He is God's Bethlehem, full of bread and water. I am so glad (aren't you?) that we have a place to come, to eat and live forever.

78 Now, the Lord bless you. Got something you want to say, brother? [Brother Neville says, "No."] Let us stand to our feet, just a moment. Our old dismissing song, "Take the name of Jesus with you."

How many love the Lord? Let's see you raise your hands way up. Now while you got your hands up, now put them down and shake hands with somebody standing by you, say, "God bless you, pilgrim. God bless you." That's right, then around. All right, that's just so you get acquainted with each other. All right.

Now, let's look right up towards the heavens and sing this song now.

Take the Name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe;
It will joy and comfort give you,
Take it everywhere you go.
Precious Name, (precious Name)
O how sweet!
Hope of earth and joy of heaven;
Precious Name, (precious Name)
O how sweet!
Hope of earth and joy of heaven.
(Now remember....)



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Sermons By
William Marrion Branham
"... in the days of the voice ..." Rev. 10:7