



The Battle for Bethlehem

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The town of Bethlehem is located approximately six miles southwest of Jerusalem in the hill country of Judea. There are three major religious groups that call Bethlehem sacred - Judaism, Christianity, Islam. As a result of the six-day war, Bethlehem came under Israeli control. However, in December of 1995, it was reverted to Palestinian control. Israelis still have access to Rachel's tomb. But there are continuous outbreaks of violence almost daily. What seems to be the reason behind the violence and despair? We can find this answer if we look to three major Biblical events concerning Bethlehem.

First, in the book of Ruth we see the tragedy of one who strays from the will of God. In the first chapter there is a famine, three funerals, great fear and the final goodbye. Ruth and Naomi have now decided to make the journey to Bethlehem. It must be noticed, they were going back to nothing! When the children of Israel possessed the land of Canaan, the land was divided among the 12 tribes. Within these allotments, the land was divided into families. No man was allowed to sell his land outside of the tribe. In case of financial difficulty, a man may be forced to mortgage his land. In this case, he lost all rights to the land until it had been redeemed by paying off the mortgage, or until the year of Jubilee, when all debts were cancelled. Apparently, this is what happened to the family of Elimelech. However, meanwhile in Bethlehem....

I. Abundant Supply

In the background of this tragedy there is a man by the name of Boaz. He was called the Kinsman-Redeemer to Naomi. He had an abundant supply of **goods**. According to Ruth chapter 2, Boaz was a wealthy man and Ruth experienced his

abundant supply firsthand. Boaz commanded the workers to drop handfuls of purpose for Ruth and when she returned home from gleaning Naomi asked her, "Where hast thou gleaned today?" Ruth and Naomi experienced the reality of Phillipians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Boaz also had an abundant supply of **grace**. In order for Boaz to be a Kinsman-Redeemer, he had to have three qualifications. He had to be a near relative, he had to be willing to redeem and he had to be able to redeem.

We can see in Scripture that Boaz had the **right to redeem** for two reasons: He was a *member of the family* (2:1, 2:20, 4:4). He was a *man of faith*.

He had the **resources to redeem**. Ruth 4:9 shows us that he had the resources to purchase Ruth's property. Boaz also had **reasons to redeem**. First, there was the reason of *giving love* (2:5, 8-17; 3:10-15). These verses indicate that Boaz loved Ruth regardless of history and poverty. Second, there was the reason of *giving life* (4:5, 13). He married her to bring life out of death.

Now let us go forward into history to a time when Israel's king disobeyed God and was now headed into a downward spiral of despair. King Saul started out with hope, but died a bitter hateful man because of his disobedience. God's chosen people now need someone to guide them back into the presence of God. Meanwhile in Bethlehem...

II. Anointed Shepherd

Samuel anoints young David to be the shepherd of his people. David had such an impact on Bethlehem, the city was called in Luke chapter 2, "the city of David." David is a type of Jesus Christ and Jesus referred to Himself in John 10 as the **Good Shepherd**. I believe sinner

and saint alike can say God is good! Christ is also a **Guarding Shepherd**.

*"The road I have traveled has
sometimes been steep.
Through wild, jagged places of life.*

*Sometimes I've stumbled and fallen so
hard that the stones cut my soul like a
knife.*

*But the staff of my shepherd
would reach out for me
and lift me to cool pastures green.*

*Oil of the Spirit anointing my wounds.
There I'd rest by the clear,
healing stream."*

Finally, for 400 years God was silent. He knew the time had come for an ultimate sacrifice. Millions of lambs had been slain to make an atonement for the sins of the people. Now the time had come. Meanwhile in Bethlehem...

III. Atoning Savior

A. The Necessity of Atonement

1. The Nature of God Demanded It (Habakkuk 1:13)
2. The Condition of Man Required It (Romans 3:23, 6:23)

B. The Nature of Atonement

1. Achieved through the Shedding of Blood (Hebrews 9:22, Leviticus 17:11)
2. Required the Sacrifice of the Innocent for the Guilty (Exodus 12:5)
3. Completely Fulfilled in the Lord Jesus (John 1:29)
4. The Old Testament Types of Christ were Offered Once a Year, every year (Hebrews 9:6-7)
5. Christ's Atonement Was Once and for All (Hebrews 9:11-12)