



## Bethlehem



When we go camping in the summer, we like to setup and stay for a while. As I sit in my camp chair drinking coffee in the morning sun for 7 to 10 days in a row, I am often amazed at the activity around us. Campsites fill up and empty on a constant basis: tents go up and down, boats and trailers are parked and moved, vehicles change and different people and pets appear continuously as we stay on.

Sitting there, I have lazily wondered what would all be recorded if someone placed a camera in one tree, trained on one campsite for a summer. It would be a continually changing record of people, conversations, behaviour, interactions, structures, vehicles and customs all occurring in a specific, static location.

As we have spent time reflecting on the Christmas Story the past few weeks, I've wondered what it would be like to view a thousand year recording from a tree high above Bethlehem.

According to Biblical records, this camera would pick up Rachel suffering and dying in childbirth as she gives birth to Benjamin. You would see Jacob mourning the death of his beloved wife and Joseph missing his mom. *“As I was returning from Paddan,” ... says Jacob... “to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem).*” Genesis 48:7

Hundreds of years later, the camera would record the fact that *“Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning”* Ruth 1:21-22. You would see Ruth meeting Boaz, being brought into the family of Israel and giving birth to a son named Obed.

Two generations after Ruth, Samuel would walk into the city, dusty and a little bit scared. The Lord had said to him, *“How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”* But Samuel said, *“How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.”* The LORD said, *“Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”* 1 Samuel 16:1-3

As that scene played out, you would have seen each of Jesse’s son pass by Samuel until David arrives. *“He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; he is the one.”* So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.” 1 Samuel 16:12-13

Later, David was in the midst of battle and desperate for water. That day you might have witnessed a small skirmish as three of his *“mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well*

*near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David.” 2 Samuel 23:16*

When David’s grandson, Rehoboam, succeeded Solomon and the nation split into two rival kingdoms – Judah and Israel – the camera would have picked up feverish activity in Bethlehem as the city was fortified to help protect Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 11). Only 6 miles from the capital, and 100 feet higher up, it was an important point of defence.

And then, as the nation fell into further disrepair and it became a province under the control of Babylon, the camera would have recorded year after year of ordinary activities in a small forgotten town until the words of Micah came to pass; *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”* Micah 5:2

Question for application:

If a camera was placed on your street or in your home and recorded events that occurred and words would that were said, what story of faith would be revealed?

Blessings to you this week, as you consider Bethlehem,

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