

The Journey

Daily Readings Week 4

Continue the Journey to Bethlehem by reflecting on these scriptures as you prepare for Christ's birth.

MONDAY 12.20.21 Ruth 4:1-17

Bethlehem, though small, was famous in Israel's history (unlike Nazareth, an unknown village). Matthew 1:5 listed Ruth among Jesus' ancestors. She was from Moab, the widow of an Israelite from Bethlehem. Boaz, a kinsman of her husband, "redeemed" her (along with her husband's property). They married and were King David's great-grandparents.

TUESDAY 12.21.21 1 Samuel 16:1-13

In Luke's Christmas story, on the night of Jesus' birth the angel said, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior." Today we read about David and his city. God sent Samuel, the prophet, to Bethlehem to find one of Jesse's sons and anoint him king. Little could Samuel (or David) envision how far into the future that story would reach.

WEDNESDAY 12.22.21 Micah 5:1-4

Micah was a prophet in Jerusalem about 700 years before Christ. (Jeremiah 26:8 mentioned him.) As the armies of the mighty Assyrian Empire threatened Jerusalem, Micah looked beyond the immediate danger. God would send a deliverer, he said. This divine ruler would be born in Bethlehem, but his greatness would "reach to the ends of the earth."

THURSDAY 12.23.21 John 7:37-44

This isn't a usual Christmas reading. But Christmas is tucked away in it, almost as unseen as the first Christmas itself. Jesus' enemies were arguing that he couldn't possibly be God's Messiah. They used his growing up in Galilee as proof: "Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" (verse 42) And, of course, he did—if they had only paid attention.

FRIDAY 12.24.21 Luke 2:1-7

Caesar Augustus' purpose was to collect more taxes for his far-flung empire. God "bent" Caesar's decree to divine purposes, using it to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, a hard trip for pregnant Mary. There the baby Jesus was born, as Micah prophesied.

SATURDAY 12.25.21 Luke 2:8-20

Christmas day is here! We're used to the shepherds in manger scenes, Christmas pageants and paintings. Yet when Jesus was born, no one looked for shepherds. They were obscure (like Mary). Most priests shunned them because, caring for flocks, they couldn't keep the rituals "holiness" required. But God loved them. When Jesus grew up, he said, "I am the good shepherd".