



BETHLEHEM
in ST. LOUIS

The Journey
to Christmas

Welcome to Bethlehem in St. Louis!

We at Canaan Baptist Church are so excited that you have chosen to come and experience the power of hope as you journey back in time to the ancient town of Bethlehem.

This booklet will serve as your guide as you journey from our Worship Center outside to the marketplace. Use this booklet at each booth/station to help you pick up on key words and to better understand the full story of THE Christmas event!



THE ROMAN GUARDS:

Okay, so you'll quickly notice that these guards aren't the nicest guys in the world. Welcome to life in ancient Israel. Rome was the occupying empire and cared very little for the Hebrew people. They saw anyone who wasn't Roman as very beneath them and, often, their attitudes and actions towards these people reflected that attitude. So, don't be alarmed if these soldiers are rude—they're in character.

Armor and Clothing for Roman Soldiers: Roman soldiers wore sandals, with iron studs on the leather soles. Their swords were short swords designed for close range, hand to hand combat. Their shields were designed to interlock with other soldiers' shields to form an impregnable wall against enemy arrows when in formation.

THE CENSUS:

Mary and Joseph's whole purpose in going, as far as they were concerned, was to register for the census that had been ordered by the Emperor of Rome, Augustus Caesar. Any Hebrew who was a descendant of the famous King David had to travel to Bethlehem to register in this census. Of course, along with the census came the paying of many taxes! How awful to live under oppressive conditions! Such oppression reminds us of our need for hope.



Denarii: Around 211 B.C., a new silver coin was introduced in the Roman Empire which would continue to be minted for well over 400 years—the denarius. Our word “penny” is derived from “denarius.” Only the “mite” was worth less.

THE MARKETPLACE

The shops in the Bethlehem marketplace have been divided into the following 5 sections:



1

CREATION



2

CORRUPTION



3

CATASTROPHE



4

CHRIST



5

CROSS



PASSPORT STATIONS: We invite kids to use the passport pages in the back of this booklet to get a stamp at each of the 5 sections.



1: CREATION

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

- Genesis 1:1

This first section of the marketplace reminds us of the **POWER**, **BEAUTY**, and **GOODNESS** of God revealed in creation. In the beginning, God made everything. Creation was beautiful and full of the glory of God.

SHOP #1: POTTERY // KEYWORD: POWER

Watch as the potter uses her hands to form the pottery into something beautiful from a lump of clay. The Bible says God formed man out of the dirt and made him a living being. (Genesis 2:7) The pottery shop reminds us that in His **POWER**, God created the universe.

SHOP #2: JEWELRY // KEY WORD: BEAUTY

In those first six days, God created all the universe. Creation displayed the **BEAUTY** of God's glorious design and intent for all of life to thrive in peace and harmony. Mankind was the crowning finish and bore the image of God (Genesis 1:27-28). Here in the jewelry shop, we see some of the most beautiful pieces of God's creation. Such beauty reminds us of God's original design for the earth.

SHOP #3: FRUITS & VEGETABLES // KEY WORD: GOOD

In the Garden of Eden, God provided Adam and Eve with the most luscious and delicious fruits and vegetables one can imagine. These plants grew effortlessly and produced abundantly for Adam, Eve and all living things to enjoy. When God completed His creation on day six, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very **GOOD.**" (Genesis 1:31) These delicious fruits and vegetables remind us of how good it was in the Garden of Eden—in God's original perfect design.

God gave mankind responsibility to oversee creation and to obey God's true laws. Unfortunately, mankind disobeyed God, and as a result God's creation of power, beauty, and goodness now faced corruption!



2: CORRUPTION

"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."

- Genesis 2:17

With disobedience to God's command and law, came the corruption of all of creation. Men became sinners, animosity emerged within the animal kingdom, and climate and weather became skewed. This section of the marketplace reminds us of the consequences and effects of the Fall of mankind.

SHOP #4: LEATHER TANNER // KEY WORD: SACRIFICE

Leather is made from animal skins which we use for many things. But there has never been a greater use of leather than by God for Adam and Eve. After they sinned, Adam and Eve realized shame and nakedness for the first time. God made coverings for them from skins (Genesis 3:21). Therefore, in order to cover the shame of Adam and Eve, God took the lives of animals to provide the skins. This is an early picture of **SACRIFICE**—one life sacrificed for another. It is a painful reminder of the impact of corruption. When this sacrifice is done voluntarily, it is the greatest act of love.

SHOP #5: METAL // KEY WORD: HARD WORK

Watch the metal workers exercise their skill. What mastery and what **HARD WORK**! Originally, in the Garden of Eden work was easy. One of the many consequences of Adam and Eve's sin was that work became difficult! (Genesis 3:17).

SHOP #6: OILS & SPICES // KEY WORD: **DEATH**

Don't the spices and oils smell nice? In ancient Bethlehem they were used in cooking, as perfumes, and interestingly to prepare dead bodies for burial to alleviate the smell. The greatest consequence of the corruption is **DEATH!** Death is the ultimate evil we cannot conquer. (Romans 6:23) God's design was for us to live forever, but Adam and Eve forfeited that for themselves and for us through their corruption.

THE PHARISEES // KEY WORD: **CONFUSION**

Listen to the Pharisees. They sure seem smart. They wore the nicest clothes and were very intelligent. Yet they had twisted the teachings of God into a religion that gave no real hope and created much **CONFUSION**. They taught that someone could strive to be good enough to earn God's forgiveness in spite of their corruption! This is **NOT** the teaching of God in the Old Testament and definitely not the teaching of Christ in the New Testament.



3: CATASTROPHE

God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth. Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth. - Genesis 6:12-13

After Adam and Eve's sin, mankind quickly became wicked. God knew He had to refine and renew His creation. Choosing one family that still believed in Him, the family of Noah, God prepared them for what He would do—destroy and renew the earth.

SHOP #7: BASKET // KEY WORD: REFUGE

In the Hebrew language, the word for "basket" is the same as the word "ark." In ancient understanding, an ark was a place of safety—**REFUGE**. Noah's family found safety and refuge in God through the ark. Baby Moses found safety and refuge in a basket as God saves him from being killed. When you see the baskets, think of God's provision of rescue.

NOTE: In the New Testament, Peter refers to Jesus as a type of "ark."

SHOP #8: FISH // KEY WORD: ENDURE

Fish served as a major item in the diet of the people of ancient Bethlehem. Fish were always in abundance. When God judged the world and sent the flood, the fish endured. They were not destroyed by God's judgment. Likewise, when God judges the world in the future, there will be a group of people who will **ENDURE** and not experience His judgment. "Who?" you may ask—those who follow Jesus. Interestingly, one of the symbols for followers of Jesus is the fish.

The consequences of sin are devastating! Like a virus, sin entered all of creation and into the hearts of mankind. Since God is just, He was compelled to judge that sin! Now, sin, suffering and pain are passed down from generation to generation; all creation continues to suffer. Yet God had an even greater solution than the ark—His solution is the Ark of Jesus Christ!



4: CHRIST

I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David. - Luke 2:10-11

Although God is just and brings judgment, He also loves deeply. In His grace He renewed His creation and started anew. However, mankind still sins (Romans 3:23)—this includes you and me. We cannot overcome our own corruption or the corruption of creation—only God can and He did! He came in the flesh—in the person of Christ, God's Son.

SHOP # 9: CLOTH WEAVER // KEY WORD: **HUMBLE**

The Son of God entered creation simply and **HUMBLY**. Cloth, as seen in this shop, was used to swaddle the Baby Jesus when He was born. Could you imagine how these cloth weavers might have felt had they known their cloth swaddled the very Son of God.

SHOP # 10: CARPENTRY // KEY WORD: COMMON

Jesus came, not in splendor or in might, but as one of us—truly human and **COMMON**. As you watch these carpenters work, you see products similar to those made by Jesus and His earthly father Joseph in their shop.

SHOP # 11: BREAD // KEY WORD: LIFE

Bread was and still is a very basic necessity of life. In fact, the name “Bethlehem” meant “house of bread.” How incredible that in the House of Bread was born the “Bread of **LIFE**.” (John 6:35). Jesus refers to Himself as the Bread of Life, for any who trust in Him will be rescued from the corruption of themselves and creation.

MANGER // KEY WORD: **IMMANUEL**

This is THE story of Christmas! God sent His Son in the flesh to become one of us. He set in motion the redemption of mankind and creation, destroyed the corruption, and restored God's original design and intention for all who follow Christ.

One of Jesus' names is "**IMMANUEL**" which means, "God with us."



Fun Fact: Did you know that the "manger" does not refer to the cave or barn in which Jesus was born? A manger is another word for "feeding trough." The manger refers to the makeshift crib Mary and Joseph used to lay the Baby Jesus.



5: CROSS

Carrying His own cross, He went out to what is called Skull Place, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him and two others with Him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

- John 19:17-18

The Christmas story continues from the manger to the life of Christ. His teachings, His sinlessness, His miracles and His sacrifice all culminate at the Cross.

CROSS // KEY WORD: **FORGIVENESS**

Christmas doesn't end in the manger because Jesus' purpose wasn't just to be born but to die. He became the **ONE** voluntary sacrifice that once and for all secured the **FORGIVENESS** of our sins and corruption. Through Jesus alone, we can have total forgiveness of our sins (1 John 1:9).

EMPTY TOMB // KEY WORD: **ETERNAL LIFE**

We all love Christmas, but if it weren't for Easter, we wouldn't celebrate Christmas. Jesus' resurrection authenticates Him as the Son of God. His resurrection makes everything He taught and did so extremely important. In the resurrection, Jesus secured our salvation, our **ETERNAL LIFE**.

***Fun Fact:** A very wealthy man named Joseph of Arimathea donated his unused tomb to be used for Jesus' body. Joseph was a high ranking official on the high Jewish Council (called the Sanhedrin). Ironically, it was this very council that pushed for the execution of Jesus.*



YOU are part of this story.

God's solution to rescue mankind and all of creation from corruption is sending His only Son, Jesus. Christ alone can forgive our sins, change us from being corrupted and one day make us incorruptible. But this is not automatic for us. We must receive Him. John 1:12 says, "To as many as receive Him to them He gives them the right to be children of God." So, how do you receive Christ? Here are some Scriptures to guide you:

*If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. **Romans 10:9-10***

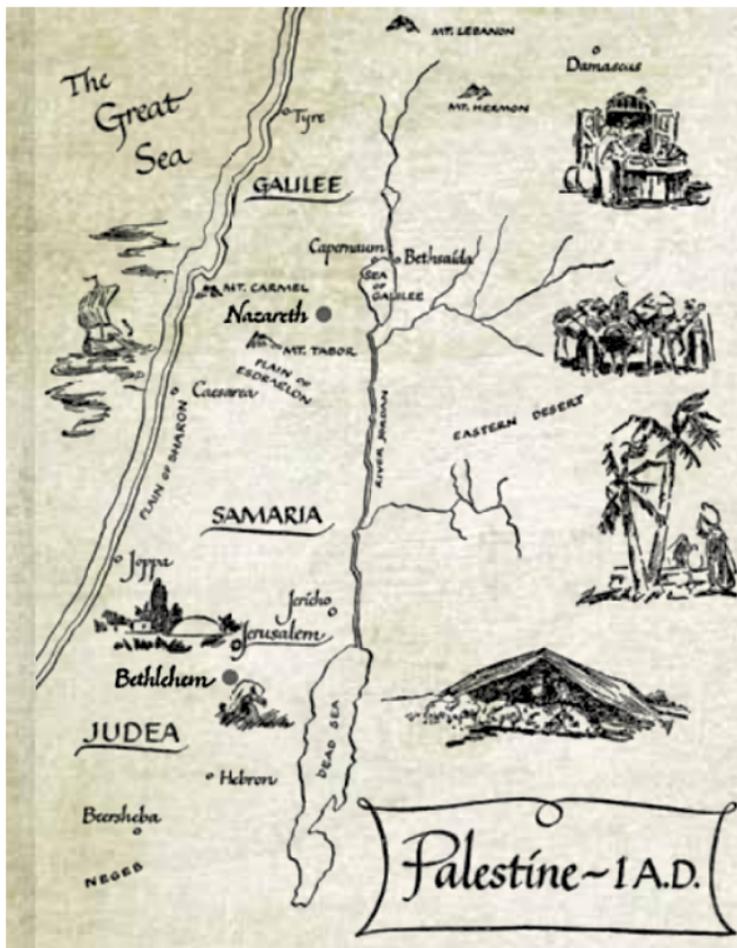
*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:9***

*For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— not from works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8-9***

If you would like to talk more about this story, people are available inside the church to chat with you. You can also call us at 314-487-1730 or email us at info@canaanstl.org.

I am so glad you chose to participate in Bethlehem in St. Louis here at Canaan Baptist Church this year. I pray you've gotten a glimpse into the true meaning of Christmas and that you and your loved ones have a very merry Christmas.

- Pastor Daniel



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... in St. Louis

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WORSHIP WITH US!

We pray you have a very Merry Christmas and continue to celebrate the coming of the amazing Savior Jesus Christ our Lord! Also, if you and/or your family are not actively attending any church, it would be our honor to have you worship with us here at Canaan Baptist Church!

Merry Christmas!



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