

**COME
INTO THE
TOWER**

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Dec. 25, 2011

Sermon in a sentence: Run into the “Jesus Tower” to find complete safety and salvation.

Scriptures: Micah 5:2,4-5a; Micah 4:1-8; 2 Samuel 22:1-3; Luke 2: 1-20; Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 61:1-4

Many of us are familiar with the prophecy recorded in the book of Micah, specifying the birth of Jesus in the town of Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2 (NASB) "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

Bethlehem wasn't a huge town in Jesus' day, probably having a population somewhere close to 600 people. Many more people than normal were in town due to the census, and Mary and Joseph were trying to squeeze in along with everyone else. When the time came for Mary to deliver her child, there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7).

The word translated 'inn' (katalyma) only appears three times in the NT and in both other cases (Lk. 22:11; Mk. 14:14), it is translated 'guest room'.

It is quite likely that Mary and Joseph had tried to find lodging with a distant relative living in Bethlehem, but when it came time for Jesus to be born, other relatives were in the guest room, forcing Mary and Joseph to find another place to go. There was no room in the

inn, so they had to be somewhere else when the time came for Jesus to be delivered.

In 4:8, Micah gives another clue as to exactly where the birth took place:

Micah 4:1-8 (NASB) And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. 2 Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 3 And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war. 4 Each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make them afraid, For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. 5 Though all the peoples walk Each in the name of his god, As for us, we will walk In the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. 6 "In that day," declares the Lord, "I will assemble the lame And gather the outcasts, Even those whom I have afflicted. 7 "I will make the lame a remnant And the outcasts a strong nation, And the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever. 8 "As for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come— Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

The Lord, who would reign in Mount Zion (v.7), the One in whose name the people would walk forever (v. 5), would come to this place described in v. 8 as the

**“tower of the flock”, “Migdal-eder” in Hebrew.
 (“Migdal”: “tower”; “eder”: “flock”).**

The use and value of a tower is shown on a number of occasions in the OT. All the way back to the aftermath of the Flood, Nimrod and his colleagues decided they needed to build a city and a tower to make a name for themselves and maintain their presence in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:4). This building came to be known as the tower of Babel, because it actually led to confusion and dispersion, the exact opposite of what Nimrod had intended (Gen. 11:9).

In the book of Judges, after the death of Gideon, his son Abimelech, (the son of his Shechemite concubine), rose up against his brothers, killing seventy of them and taking the reigns of power with the help of his relatives on his mother’s side (Ju. 8:31; 9:5-6). After ruling three years, the Lord sent strife between him and his relatives and they went to war with each other. The people of Shechem had built a great tower into which their leaders ran for protection when Abimelech came to fight against them. Abimelech burned the tower and the leaders, killing about 1,000 people. Unfortunately for them, the tower wasn’t of much value for their protection.

Throughout Kings and Chronicles, various other towers are mentioned as important components of the defense system on Israelite cities (e.g. 2 Kg. 9:17; 17:9; 18:7; 1 Ch. 27:25; 2 Ch. 14:7; 32:5).

King David, Israel’s most famous ruler, fought many wars, endured great hardships and unfairness and finally, late in life, came to a place of peace and rest.

He wrote a psalm that is good for us to consider as we continue our discussion of the importance of towers:

2 Samuel 22:1-3 (NASB) And David spoke the words of this song to the Lord in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. 2 He said, "**The Lord** is my **rock** and my **fortress** and my **deliverer**; 3 **My God**, my rock, in whom I take **refuge**, My **shield** and the **horn** of my salvation, my **stronghold** and my **refuge**; My **savior**, You save me from violence.

Many of the examples you'll read about towers in the OT show that for all the time and effort people put into building them, and for all the trust they placed in them, they usually failed to give them the protection they were expecting.

David however, had his trust firmly placed in another tower. Not a tower made by man, but the tower of Jehovah! His son Solomon put it this way:

Proverbs 18:10 (NASB) **The name of the Lord is a strong tower**; The righteous runs into it and is safe.

Let's keep all this in mind as we jump back to our friend Micah, who wrote to us about Migdal-eder.

As many sheep herders had done before, the shepherds in Bethlehem had built a tower to protect themselves and their sheep, a lookout against raiders, a place of shelter, and a place for them to help ewes give birth in inclement weather. Lots of things could be done outdoors, but especially in winter, the tower was a wonderful asset.

There were living quarters in the tower, so it wouldn't have been strange for Mary and Joseph to have been staying there since there was no room in the inn, the guest suite. Quite possibly, one of Joseph's relatives had arranged this accommodation for them. (The scriptures give us no indication they were going door to door looking for a place for Mary to give birth to the Messiah!)

Think of the significance of Jesus being born in the tower and laid in the manger. For centuries, young lambs had been offered up as sin sacrifices to God - the loss of life - the shedding of blood, as the payment for sin. Perfect, spotless lambs were required: the perfect substituting for the imperfect.

People would come from all over Israel to offer sacrifice at the Temple. For those who could not bring their sacrifices with them because of distance, sacrifices could be purchased at the Temple. It is certainly not hard to imagine that these local shepherds, so close to Jerusalem, would be suppliers to the Temple, delivering spotless lambs to the sacrifice sellers at the Temple. It is not hard to imagine that many of the lambs born at Migdal-eder would have ended up on the altar in Jerusalem.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist pointed Him out to the crowd and said: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29,36). Jesus would be the one and only, true, spotless Lamb of God, the perfect substituting for the imperfect, His blood being shed to deliver humanity from the ravages of sin and death.

So we turn our attention to the Christmas story and the events in Bethlehem:

Luke 2:1-20 (NASB) Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." 15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it

wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

The shepherds were stunned! They had been visited by angels. They were told they would find Christ the Lord, the Savior of the world, (the spotless Lamb of God), lying in the manger as a tiny baby!

They had no hesitation. They didn't have to ask where to go. There was no confusion in their minds as to where this manger would be. The manger was in the tower of the flock! Migdal-eder. The place where lambs were born! The scripture says they "came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph" and of course "the baby as He lay in the manger".

The tower that represented the place of protection and shelter, the place of birth and new life, now housed the very giver of life, the perfect Lamb of God, the only One who can truly protect us and save us from our great enemies: Satan and his evil angels. Death, hell and the grave. Sin. Self. The world, the flesh and the devil.

David the king had begun his working life as a shepherd and proved that he was ready, willing and able to protect his sheep (1 Sam. 17:34-36a). But even he realized his strength wasn't enough to see him through all his situations. Here's the prayer he prayed:

Psalm 61:1-4 (NASB) Hear my cry, O God; Give heed to my prayer. 2 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the

rock that is higher than I. 3 For **You have been a refuge for me, A tower of strength against the enemy.** 4 Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.

This prayer isn't stale. It's as fresh today as when David first prayed it. We also need to cry out to the Lord, acknowledging His past performance in our lives.

He *has* been our refuge. He *has* been our tower of strength. He *has* been our covering, our tent, our refuge when our hearts have been faint.

This is Christmas day and we know where to find Jesus. He's in His tower. The name of the Lord is the strong tower. Calling on the name of Jesus brings us into the orbit of His strength and power, wisdom and love, healing, deliverance and salvation.

The door is wide open. Come into the tower. No-one can defeat those who are in this tower. Jesus is in the tower.