

Where was King David born?

King David was born in Bethlehem, a small town in the hill country of Judah. Bethlehem is called “the city of David” in Luke 2:4 and 11.

During the days of King Saul, the Lord told the prophet Samuel to anoint a young shepherd boy as the next king over Israel. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem, where David lived with his family (1 Samuel 16:1-4). Scripture describes David as “the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah” (1 Samuel 17:12). The Bible specifically mentions Ephrath (or Ephrathah) and Judah along with Bethlehem to distinguish it from another town named Bethlehem that was in region of Zebulun.

David’s great-grandparents also lived in Bethlehem. Ruth and Boaz lived in Bethlehem, and it was there they raised their son, Obed (Ruth 4:11). Obed became the father of Jesse, the father of David (Ruth 4:21-22). Jesse is called “Jesse of Bethlehem” by one of King Saul’s servants in 1 Samuel 16:18.

Historically, Bethlehem was considered a rather unimportant place. Joshua 15:20-61 contains a list of towns and villages that the tribe of Judah inherited as part of the dividing of the Promised Land. Ninety-six towns are listed by name—but Bethlehem is not among them. It was not a major city by any measure. Likewise, Nehemiah 11:25-30 lists 17 cities of Judah, but the town of Bethlehem is not on that list, either. The prophet Micah records God’s observation that Bethlehem was “too little to be among the clans of Judah” (Micah 5:2, ESV).

Despite the seeming insignificance of Bethlehem, God chose it as the backdrop of Ruth and Boaz’s romance, as the birthplace of King David, and as the natal home of Jesus

Christ, the Savior of the world. The little town of Bethlehem thus has great significance in the Bible. God, in His sovereignty, often chooses people, places, and things of apparent triviality to accomplish His divine purposes: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). Micah's prophecy must have surprised many: "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).