Bethlehem city is located to the south of Jerusalem at the edge of the Judean Desert and surrounded with olive groves at an elevation of 777 m (2555 ft) above the sea level. It was first mentioned in the Old Testament as the place associated with death and burial of Rachel the second wife of Jacob (Gen.48:7). Since then, Bethlehem had acquired many names and titles: Ephrata, Bet-lechem (House of bread/Hebrew), Baita-lahm (House of meat/ Arabic), City of King David, Cradle of peace, all depicting a city of importance, abundance and great influence throughout tenths of centuries.

It goes without saying that the most crucial and important event that took place in Bethlehem was the birth of Jesus Christ more than 2000 years ago, this event left an indelible imprint on the destiny and faith of the human race ever after till our present day. Numerous biblical events took place in Bethlehem too, which gave the city great religious and spiritual values for Christians and Jews. Despite the political conflicts that prevail the region since decades. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and tourists insist to follow the Bethlehem Star every year to visit the birth place of Christ and discover its biblical sites and fascinating surroundings. In the old city of Bethlehem, every single stone have a story to tell.

Bethlehem is a modern Christian city. The Bethlehem agglomeration includes the towns of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour (Shepherds field). The three cities home one of the biggest Christian communities in the Middle East. The vast majority of the Bethlehem district inhabitants make their living through activities related to tourism; modern hotels, large restaurants, tourists shopping centers and tenths of factories and workshops which employs thousands of artisans mainly manufacturing souvenirs and religious artifacts made from olive wood, Mother of Pearl, pottery, bee wax candles and traditional Palestinian embroidery, all to be marketed locally or exported.

Bethlehem is also known for its famous marble and stone industry, hundreds of queries at the outskirts of the city provide the region with white and purple building stones and marble tiles. In the Holy Land the four facades of any building must be covered with stones according to municipal regulations.

Aerial view of Bethlehem

Shepherds field church

Market-place

Rachel's tomb

Intercontinental Jacer Palace Hotel

University of Bethlehem

Bethlehem 1880

Christmas celebrations

Remains of Herod's castle

King Solomon Pools near Bethlehem

Unfortunately, during the last three decades, hundreds of Christian families emigrated from the area due to the merciless political aggressions and the illogical social and racist commercial restrictions imposed on the population as a result of the endless conflicts in the region, recently a racist and suffocating 35ft. high concrete wall was erected around the city thus separating it from Jerusalem and the surroundings.