

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

JROC – And the People...Marveled!

December 6, 2020

Are we crying out to Jesus in our world today, “Come our long expected Jesus”...the second time?

“Jesus was born into CHAOS”!

The world of Jesus was NOT the OT Hebrew world!!!!

- Israel was multicultural.
- There was much Greek influence.
 - LXX – the Septuagint – the Hebrew OT was translated into koine Greek – and could then be universally read.
 - BUT – Greek philosophy was taught to the point where it was being forced upon the Jewish people. Man, not God, was at the center of the universe!
 - The more conservative-minded Jews (Hasidim – “separatists”) opposed Hellenism and became the Pharisees.
 - Those willing to adopt “the Greek way of life” became Sadducees (no resurrection; no angelic beings).
 - Neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees are mentioned in the OT!
- After the Assyrians carried away the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, they, the Assyrians, resettled Israel with conquered people from other nations!
- After the Prophet Malachi’s warnings, for 430 years God did NOT send a prophet to speak words of warning to Israel...ANT THEN, after 430 years, THE SILENCE WAS BROKEN!

And the people MARVELED!

Are we marveling?

When I know about the world into which Jesus was born, I can better understand the Gospels...I can better GRASP Jesus’ teachings...I can REJOICE...I can MARVEL AT WHAT God is doing and continuing to do even TODAY!

AND, I STAND IN AWE OF GOD!!!

The SAME GOD is on HIS THRONE!!!! May we continue to stand in AWE OF HIM!

Were all the details surrounding Jesus' birth ideal?
GOD had inspired the Prophet Malachi to write...

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Mal. 3:1 - *'Behold, I send My messenger (John), and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek,*

will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant (the Messiah), in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts.

And, so we read in Luke 1:5 - *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. (I Chron. 24 – the divisions of the priests) His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.*

The angel, Gabriel came to Zachariah, the priest, as Zachariah was burning incense in the Temple at the time of sacrifice.

READ Luke 1:6-17 (cross reference Isa. 40:3-5 – *A voice crying in the wilderness...*)

READ Luke 1:18-22

Zachariah means "God remembers"

READ Luke 1:59-66

Realizing that John would be the forerunner of the Messiah, Zachariah anticipates the SOON coming of Israel's Deliverer and proclaims – HE SPEAKS - most joyfully...

READ Luke 1:67fff

In Zachariah's benediction he primarily focuses on the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant – which will happen in the Millennial/Messianic Kingdom. Here is the OT's Messianic promise and Israel's hope – God visiting Israel for redemption through the Savior, the Redeemer, and King in King David's line. Zachariah was praising God that the Messiah would soon appear and fulfill all of God's promises to Abraham including blessing, protection, and possession of their land and victory over their enemies forever! (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. 15:18-21; Gen. 22:16-18).

Gabriel is sent to a young virgin named, Mary. This young virgin was already betrothed to Joseph who was of the house of David, of the tribe of Judah. Sometime during that betrothal period, life became very complicated for the young couple.

Luke 1:26-28 – *"²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary."*

Teenage girls occupied a very low status in those times.

AND, Mary lived in Galilee, which was NOT the center of Jewish culture. It was NOT the home of Rabbinism. Galileans were known for their generous spirits, warm &

impulsive hearts, intense nationalism, simple manners (in religious observances), and earnest piety. They cared for honor over money. Therefore, Galileans were looked down upon by the religious leadership in Jerusalem. There was a general contempt in Rabbinic circles for all that was Galilean. The people of Galilee were blamed for neglecting the study of their language, neglecting traditionalism, charged with errors in grammar and esp. charged with what Rabbinic circles labeled as absurd malpronunciation. “Galilean – Fool!” was a common expression.

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And, Nazareth was an obscure town where roughly two hundred people farmed land and tended animals. Nazareth sat in a slight depression high in the mountains overlooking the Jezreel Valley. This made it a perfect place for a garrison of Roman soldiers to keep watch over the region. They had their own observation tower. A group of soldiers in a tiny town can lead to trouble. Consequently, the Jews of Nazareth gained a nasty reputation for immorality. When the disciple Nathaniel heard that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, he said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) That was how Nazareth was known! In fact, some connected “Nazareth” with a word which meant *germ* – something despised! Despised!

The root word for Nazareth – *nezer* – BRANCH! Branch – Messianic title (Jer. 23:5-6; Isa. 4:2; Isa. 6:12-13; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 3:8; Zech. 6:12-13). And He was called “Jesus of Nazareth”! Translation into the Hebrew “Yeshua (God is salvation) the Branch!

Luke 1:29-33 - ²⁹ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

Observations:

After 430 years of what felt like God’s silence, Mary learned that she would carry the Messiah in her womb and give birth to the Messiah! Mary had good reason to ponder. What was God doing? The Mosaic Law demanded stoning for what the people would perceive as adultery – Deut. 22:13-21.

How did Mary respond to this message from Gabriel?

Luke 1:34 – Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’

Mary wasn’t questioning Gabriel’s announcement re: Who her Son would be. Her question was – how is this going to happen since I have not been intimate or will be intimate in the very near future with a man!!

Luke 1:35-37 – *And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.’*

Gabriel used the word “overshadow” in explaining this divine conception to Mary. The Gk. for “overshadow” means to envelope in a haze of brilliancy! (the glory of God – manifested by fire/light)

Is the word “overshadow” significant? After Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord directed him to construct a tabernacle – a portable house of worship. When it was complete, God OVERSHADOWED the tent (Ex. 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-16).

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The glory of God in the pillar of cloud covered the tent. The glory cloud (“Shekinah” – shachan – to dwell) in the OT symbolized God’s presence. A Jewish person would be familiar with the word “overshadowed.”

Gabriel, in telling Mary that “the power of the Most High will overshadow you,” was explaining that God’s spiritual presence would miraculously bring about conception in her womb. While the child would be human in every respect, He would not have a human father.

And Mary responded with, “Behold the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” We see a humble, submissive heart!

The term “bondservant” refers to someone who voluntarily sells himself or herself into slavery. Mary expressed her complete submission to the will of God!

God directed Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in response to a decree for a census issued by the pagan Caesar Augustus. Caesar Augustus was moved by the Spirit of God at exactly the right time. And, he unknowingly fulfilled what the Jewish prophet, Micah, wrote centuries earlier.

Micah 5:2 tells of the One Whose days were from eternity Who would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah.

The irony re: the census that Caesar Augustus issues is that it was one of the ways he employed to get control over his empire. He hailed himself as the Savior of the world. As he sought to tighten his grip, what he organized led to the fulfillment of the birth of the One Who would eventually reign over the world!

So – Mary and Joseph travel to – Bethlehem.

Joseph, Mary’s betrothed husband nearly divorced her (Matt. 2:18-21). He brought her to Bethlehem near the end of her pregnancy through a decree made by a Gentile. There was

no room at the inn – rejection before Jesus was even born! Jesus' entrance into this world was far less than grand – from a human perspective.

BUT GOD – Gal. 4:4 – *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem. . . .*

So, it was the PERFECT time!