

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS
JROC/Week 3 – The First and Second Coming
December 13, 2020

The people in Judea were discussing all that was transpiring prior to Jesus' birth (Luke 1:21; Luke 1:63; Luke 2:18). AND – they were MARVELING at the happenings. May He give us His joy as we celebrate the birth of our precious Jesus! Let's MARVEL!

The Christmas accounts from Luke and from Matthew speak to Jesus' FIRST COMING and His SECOND COMING!

Luke 2:8-12 - This doesn't make much sense unless you know what was written about the Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures.

...behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, Firstly, why would an angel of the Lord appear to shepherds? Shepherds were the lowest of the low! These Jewish shepherds lived under a rabbinical ban since they were living in the fields. They couldn't obey the regulations in the Law re: washings, and purification rites, and foods. They were shunned by the Jewish community. What a message God sent to the world...God's grace reaches down to the lowest of the low.

Where were the shepherds watching their flock? Luke 2:8 – in the “same country” – in the Bethlehem area (Luke 2:4-7).

Micah 5:2 - *But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”*

Micah 5:2 specifically tells us that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. Ephrathah was the northern part of Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem on the way to the temple. This is crucial: sheep that were destined to be sacrificed in the Temple in Jerusalem had to be tended/kept within a certain radius of the Temple in Jerusalem. Ephrathah was in that radius. This ruling was made by the Rabbis. This was the ruling in Jesus' day.

Scripture tells us that Jesus came into the world in the part of Bethlehem known as Ephrathah where only sheep that were going to be sacrificed in the temple were kept. This is the Christmas message!

AND, in Ephrathah there was a tower – a watch tower called the tower of the flock – for those flock of sheep that would be sacrificed. Migdal - Hebrew for “tower”. Eder – Hebrew for “flock”.

Alfred Edersheim wrote a classic book entitled “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.” See Book 2/Chapter 6...in which Edersheim shared that Migdal Eder was not “the watchtower for the ordinary flocks that pastured on the barren sheep ground beyond Bethlehem, but it lay close to the town, on the road to Jerusalem.” We’re told that the shepherds who kept these sheep were men who specifically trained for this task. These shepherds had to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, damaged, or blemished.

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A passage from the Talmud (Rabbinic literature) states that “the flocks which pastured there (beyond Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem [close to the Temple]) were destined for Temple sacrifices...” (Shekelim 7:4).

Genesis 35:16-21 – Jacob and Rachel traveled from the north, from Bethel, going south to Bethlehem, coming first to Ephrath...there was a little distance to go to Ephrath – north of Bethlehem. After Rachel gave birth to Benjamin, her second son, she died. We’re told...¹⁹ *So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath*

(that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ *And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.* ²¹ *Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.* It is a place of sorrows. “Rachel” means “ewe”! Ewes – mama lambs - were brought to the tower of the flock to give birth to baby lambs that would be sacrificed!

The tower of the flock was a place of sorrows. At Jesus first coming He would suffer and die!

Micah 4:8 – To you, O tower of the flock shall come the One Who will bring restoration to Israel...Who will bring the Kingdom! Who will bring the Kingdom? JESUS!

Rabbi Munk has paraphrased Gen. 35:23 and Micah 4:8, explaining that these two verses speak of the Messiah. “He (Jacob) spread his tent beyond Migdal Eder, the place where King Messiah will reveal Himself...” Could this be where Jesus was born?

Did Mary and Joseph travel to this tower of the flock after they were told that there was no room at the inn?

Bible commentators and historians have speculated re: Jesus’ exact birthplace. Some have suggested a stable; Scripture doesn’t tell us that He was born in a stable. Some have suggested a cave; Scripture doesn’t tell us that He was born in a cave.

I’m suggesting that Jesus was born in this tower of the flock. Scripture doesn’t state that Jesus was born in the tower of the flock; however, Scripture points to that possibility. Scripture does tell us that Jesus was laid in a manger. There were mangers (feeding

troughs) in this tower of the flock for the sacrificial lambs. The tower of the flock was well-known in the Jewish culture. It was part of the sacrificial system.

Consider if Mary gave birth to Jesus in this tower of the flock where SACRIFICE was the focus, what a message God proclaimed to the world: Here is My Son, the perfect Lamb of God Who will be sacrificed for sin! Proverbs 18:10 – He, JESUS, is a strong Tower!

...and the glory of the Lord shone around them, Why? The glory of God, ALL Who He is, All His attributes, His character. The glory of God is eternal! In Ezekiel chapters 8 through 11, the glory of God departed from Solomon's temple. Can you imagine how brightly the glory of God shone that night? AND YET – many didn't see!!!! BUT....

The angel speaks of *good tidings of great joy which will be to all people . . .*

Isa. 41:27 tells us that the Messiah will bring good tidings at His first coming! *The first time...I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings.*

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Luke 8:1 – *Jesus went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.*

These good tidings speak of the Gospel – of forgiveness of sin for all (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:6).

The angel tells the shepherds this would all happen in the City of David, the ancient Bethlehem where David was born. The Jewish shepherds knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David (II Sam. 7 – the Davidic Covenant; Jer. 23:5; Psalms).

Why did the angel mention *a Savior*? God told the Jewish people in Isaiah 46:13: *I will place salvation in Zion – Jerusalem for Israel My glory. Isa. 45:22 – *God told Israel, "Look to Me and be saved"*! The Hebrew word for salvation is YESHUA!*

The Messiah would be born (v. 11)? Isa. 7:14 - a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son; Isa. 9:6 unto us a Child is born

We then have in the angel's message the mention of the SIGN. What is the sign? The Babe would be wrapped in swaddling cloths (Luke 2:12). How is that the sign?

All babies were wrapped in swaddling cloths so that their limbs would be straight.

How are they, the shepherds, going to find this special baby – this Savior - wrapped in swaddling cloths if all babies were wrapped this way at birth? What did

God require of the Jewish people re: sacrifices? The sacrifices had to be without BLEMISH. Sacrificial lambs born to ewes in the tower of the flock were wrapped in swaddling cloths so they wouldn't bruise. (Lev. 22:27 – lambs, goats and bulls were eligible for sacrifice at 8 days old!)

And, as part of the sign we read that the Babe was to be found lying in a manger. Isa. 11:1 speaks of the lowly birth of the Messiah. In the account of the shepherds there are two images of lowliness and humility: the lowly shepherds and in lowliness the Messiah came.

Luke 2:13-14 - And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace toward men on whom God's sovereign pleasure rests.' And then the angels departed.

Luke 2:15-16 – 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.' ¹⁶ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

How did the shepherds find the baby Jesus? I believe they knew exactly where to find the infant Savior because they knew the prophecies in Micah. They knew where the sacrificial lambs were birthed and kept. The tower of the flock was their HUB – their central location. I'm suggesting that they found Him, Jesus Who is our strong tower (Prov. 18:10; Psa. 61:3; Psa. 144:2) in that watch tower in Bethlehem Ephrathah – in the tower of the flock!

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The tower where the sheep were born – the sheep DESTINED FOR TEMPLE SACRIFICE might very well have been the birthplace for Jesus Who came first as the Suffering Servant – the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

The account of the shepherds in Luke speaks to the Messiah Who came as the LAMB OF GOD/the ultimate sacrifice – Who came to die for our sins at His first coming. He's coming again. Time has gone by and we're waiting. Scripture speaks to a GAP between the Messiah's first coming and His second coming.

In the book of Matthew we read about the Magi who appear on the scene following a gap of possibly two years from the time of Jesus' birth. AND, we see the wise men visiting Jesus with a different "agenda" than the agenda of the shepherds.

The JEWISH shepherds were told by the angel – He's here – the One you've been expecting – and the shepherds came to the family soon after Jesus was born. They found Him as a NEWBORN lying in a manger (Luke 2:12, 16).

The GENTILE wise men saw the star when Jesus was born. It took them time, however, to travel across the desert from Persia to JERUSALEM - the city where King David reigned and where the Messiah will reign as King at His second coming.

At Jerusalem the wise men encountered Herod who told them to go to Bethlehem where they found Jesus in a house as a “Child,” not a baby (Matt. 2:11).

Matt. 2:1-2

AFTER the birth of Jesus, wise men from the East came to JERUSALEM to find the KING of the Jews! That was their agenda. They were looking for a King.

The shepherds found Jesus as the Lamb of God Who would be sacrificed at His first coming.

The Magi looked for a King. When does Jesus come as King? At His second coming.

We know there’s a GAP between Jesus’ first and second coming. There’s a GAP between the shepherd’s visit and the visit by the wise men.

Who were these wise men? These Magi were NOT kings. They were KING MAKERS. The wise men LOOKED for kings! The book of Daniel tells us that the Magi were known as those who interpret dreams (Dan. 2:1-4). Because they could not interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the King put Daniel in charge of the wise men. Daniel became the Chief Administrator/master over the wise men (Dan. 2:48). What impact did Daniel have on the Magi? Daniel wrote about when the Messiah would appear in Israel (Dan. 9:26). Do you think he might’ve shared that with the wise men? I believe so. And that information was passed down from generation to generation among the Magi – the wise men.

History teaches that at the time of the Magi’s trip to Jerusalem, they were looking for a king to replace their Persian king who had been dethroned. And so, I’m strongly suggesting, that the Magi traveled to Jerusalem to find the One they had heard about through Daniel, the One Who would be the King of the Jews – JESUS!

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King Herod and the Jewish scribes directed the Magi to Bethlehem – but they didn’t go with the Gentile King makers to find the Promised One of Israel!!!

The Magi brought the child gifts: gold – symbolizing royalty; frankincense – speaks of deity; frankincense was used on the altar of incense (in front of the Holy of Holies) in the temple; myrrh – was used to embalm the dead. These gifts truly depict the Messiah Who is God (represented by frankincense), Who would die for sin (rep. by myrrh), and Who will return and reign as King (rep. by gold).

In the Christmas account in Matthew and Luke, we see God's plan of salvation in a way that we might've not before seen. We so clearly see Jesus' two roles – the Suffering Messiah, the Lamb of God, and the Conquering King. We see His two comings.

Are we MARVELING at God's AMAZING plan?

Are we fervently anticipating His ANY MOMENT RETURN FOR US?

CHRISTMAS!

- What a glorious time to celebrate the One Who came through the Jewish line because of God's unfailing promises to Israel.
- What a glorious time to celebrate the One Who is coming again for believers at any moment!

What a marvelous time to proclaim good tidings of great joy to all those who do not know Jesus personally.

Share with your Jewish friends that Christmas is Jewish and explain why. Thank them for giving the world the Messiah. Tell them that Jesus is the JEWISH Messiah for the JEWS and the GENTILES.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST