

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

Week 4 – Unto Us A Child is Born, Unto Us a Son is Given

February 11, 2020

Jesus' entrance into this world was far less than grand...from a human perspective. BUT GOD saw fit that *...when the fullness of the time had come, He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem* (Gal. 4:4-5a)...SO, it was the PERFECT time!

What are we celebrating at Christmas? The birth of the PROMISED MESSIAH. God gave the Jewish people the sacrificial system to cover their sins. God promised that the Messiah would be the ULTIMATE SACRIFICE for sin – for the sin of the world (Isa. 53)! Who were the people who were looking for the Messiah? The Jewish people. Had they veered from the Scripture? There was the remnant – the faithful Jewish people... and there were those who were yet to believe in the Messiah – yet to be considered the remnant. Did they have total comprehension? We are told of the remnant in Luke 1 & 2: Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna. There was MESSIANIC EXPECTATION/ FERVOR prior to the days of Jesus that was most probably heightened by the 430 years of silence. There was a longing for the Messiah even among many of the Jewish people who had lost sight of God's truth concerning the Messiah. Israel had been oppressed... the people were longing deliverance and they were living in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. What would that deliverance look like? What would the Messiah look like? When would He arrive? HOW would they RECOGNIZE Him??

The angel Gabriel was sent to tell Zacharias, "Jehovah Has Remembered," that God was going to give Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, both well advanced in years, a son whose name would be John. And, John, would fulfill the prophecies in Isaiah and Malachi. John would be the HERALD for the Messiah. John would ANNOUNCE the Messiah Who would come to die for the sin of the world. What was Zacharias doing when Gabriel appeared? Zacharias was offering incense to God in the Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem. Zacharias was offering incense AT THE TIME OF SACRIFICE! HOW OF GOD to send Gabriel to Zacharias at the time of sacrifice in the Temple to announce that the Messiah Who would be THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE was soon to arrive! At the announcement of Jesus' incarnation, the theme of SACRIFICE is highlighted. SACRIFICE is highlighted regarding the Messiah's first coming! The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah. And He came! AND, He's coming again.

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of the promised Messiah ...promised to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:5-6).

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

Luke 2:4 - Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem...to be registered for the worldwide census decreed by the Romans...and Mary his betrothed wife was with child

Luke 2:8-12 - *Now there were in the same country (in the area of Bethlehem) shepherds (Jewish shepherds) living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by*

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night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.

Why would an angel of the Lord appear to shepherds? Shepherds were the lowest of the low! These Jewish shepherds were under a rabbinical ban since they were living in the fields. Because they were with their flocks in the field 24/7 they couldn’t obey the regulations in the Jewish Law re: washings/purification rites, and foods. They were looked down upon by the Rabbis and by the Jewish community. And, an angel of the Lord appears to them. God’s grace reaches down to the lowest of the low – to everyone!

Where were the shepherds watching their flock? Where was Jesus born? 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.* Why is “Bethlehem Ephrathah” mentioned? Firstly, there were two Bethlehems in Israel. One in Galilee 6 mi. NW of Nazareth (Josh. 19:10, 15) and this Bethlehem in Judea. Bethlehem Ephrathah: Ephrathah means fruitful; Ephrathah was the northern part of Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem. 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 – within 6 miles. This ruling was made by the Rabbis. Scripture tells us in Micah 5:2 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! It is a message of SACRIFICE! AND, in Ephrathah there was a watch tower known as the Tower of the Flock for those sheep that would be sacrificed! Alfred Edersheim (Jewish believer now with the Lord) has recorded writings of the Rabbis re: the Tower of the Flock: “It will be the place where the Messiah will be revealed.” MIGDAL – Hebrew for “tower”. EDER – Hebrew for “flock”. Scriptural support for the watch tower: Genesis 35:21; Micah 4:8. In the Gen. 35:21 - Jacob’s wife, Rachel, gave birth to Benjamin at the site of the location of the Tower of the Flock. And, in giving birth to Benjamin, Rachel died. Rachel’s name means “ewe” – a mama sheep. Not a coincidence - a foreshadowing. Ewes (mama sheep) were brought to the Tower of the Flock to give birth to lambs that would be

sacrificed. Because of Rachel's death in this area, Bethlehem became known as a place of sorrows. Jesus was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. At His first coming Jesus would suffer and die. Micah 4:8 mentions the Tower of the Flock and states that the kingdom comes to the tower of the flock. Who will bring the Kingdom to this earth? The King of the Kingdom...JESUS! Could this be where Jesus was born? Scripture doesn't tell us that Jesus was born in a stable or in a cave. Scripture does tell us that Jesus was laid in a manger. There were mangers, feeding troughs, in this Tower of the Flock for all the lambs kept in the tower. The Tower of the Flock was well-known in the Jewish culture as 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 was proclaiming to the world – here is My Son - the perfect Lamb of God Who will be sacrificed for sin!

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Proverbs 18:10 – He, JESUS, is a strong Tower!

In Luke 2:8-12 we read that the GLORY OF THE LORD shone around the shepherds. The glory of God, as seen by man, is God's manifested presence.

Kavod – GLORY - weighty-ness – His character, His attributes, His reputation.

In the OT God chose to manifest Himself in the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day as He led the people through the wilderness. The glory of God filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem. We read of the glory of God departing from the Temple in Jerusalem in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 10, because of the abominations in the Temple!. HE'S BACK – the glory of God is back at Jesus' birth?

John 1:14 – *The Word was made flesh and dwelled (He tabernacle) among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten (unique one; not created) of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The angel then spoke to the shepherds of “good tidings of great joy...” The Jewish people had been oppressed for about 900 years. They hadn't had “good tidings” or much joy in a long while. Isa. 41:27 tells us that the Messiah will bring good tidings at His first coming! “I will give to you Israel One Who brings good tidings” – THE MESSIAH! These good tidings speak of forgiveness of sin. This truly is great joy! And these good tidings would be for ALL people – both Jews and Gentiles. God's plan of salvation is offered to the WORLD!

The Angel told the shepherds, “...there is born to you this day...in the City of David...” – the ancient Bethlehem where King David was born – “...a Savior Who is Messiah the Lord.” The Jewish shepherds knew that the Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah – a descendant of King David. A Savior? Why would that be important to the Jewish people? Being saved is a very Jewish teaching in the OT! God told the Jewish people in Isa. 45:22 – *God told Israel, “Look to Me and be saved”!* Isa. 64:5 – *...we have sinned and we need to be saved.* AND, the Hebrew word for salvation is YESHUA! Luke 2:11 tells us that the Savior - the One Who will bring salvation – Who will rescue – is the Messiah.

The Messiah would be born? YES! Isa. 7:14 - *A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel* (God with us; God in the flesh) Isa. 9:6 - Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The angel mentioned a SIGN. Luke 2:12 – *And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.* Lambs born to ewes in the place where the sacrificial lambs were kept (in the tower of the flock) were wrapped in swaddling cloths. Lev. 22:27 – lambs, goats and bulls were eligible for sacrifice at 8 days old! The lambs destined for Temple sacrifice had to be wrapped in swaddling cloths! So that they wouldn't bruise – so they would be without blemish! In the shepherds' account we see two images of lowliness and humility - the lowly shepherds who were shunned by their community, and in lowliness/humility the Messiah came.

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Luke 2:13-14 - ...and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "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 – let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the LORD HAS MADE KNOWN TO US – the lowest of the low!!

Did the angel tell the shepherds where to find the Baby? NO! Did the shepherds ask? NO! The Babe was in a manger. How many mangers could there have been? Historical references document that many of the homes in these towns had mangers. People traveled with their livestock. Mangers could be as simple a ledge protruding from the wall inside the house. Hay would be placed on that ledge – for the livestock. Mangers could be found in side-rooms in homes. And, oftentimes there were mangers in the main room of a home (I Sam. 28:24; Judges 11:31). Animals were kept in homes. Mangers were in homes! With ALL those mangers...the shepherds might've had to comb the entire city looking for this baby in a manger. BUT – I don't think they did – and they did indeed arrive at the right place. Luke 2:16 tells us that they came with HASTE and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe. I believe they knew exactly where to find the Babe because they knew the prophecies in the Scriptures in Micah. They knew where the sacrificial lambs were birthed and kept...BECAUSE THESE WERE THE SHEPHERDS THAT TOOK CARE OF THE SACRIFICIAL LAMBS! I'm suggesting that they found Him, Jesus Who is our strong tower (Prov. 18:10; Psalms 61:3; Psalm 144:2) in that watch tower in Bethlehem Ephrathah – in the Tower of the Flock! The tower where the sheep were born that were 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 and marveling! Scripture speaks to a GAP between the Messiah's first coming and His second coming. We're in the GAP! We're looking for Jesus' any moment return – His imminent (upon us) return.

The Magi appeared on the scene following a gap of possibly two years from the time of Jesus' birth. Herod's soldiers were commanded to kill Hebrew male children two years and younger. 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 the One Whom they'd been expecting had arrived. The shepherds came to the family when Jesus was born. They found Him as a newborn in a manger (Luke 2:12, 16). The wise men weren't Jewish; they were Gentiles. The Gentile wise men saw the star (*kochav* – blazing) when Jesus was born. However, it took them time to travel across the desert from Persia to Bethlehem? NO! They traveled first to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1) – 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 – and they did and . . . They found Jesus in a house (Matt. 2:11). AND, He was a "Child," not a baby (Matt. 2:11).

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Matt. 2:1-2 - *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men (we're not told how many) from the East came to Jerusalem, ²saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star (kochav – blazing) in the East and have come to worship Him.'* These wise men (and we don't know how many there were; the text doesn't tell us) – traveled 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! When was Jesus sacrificed as the LAMB of God? 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 – these wise men were NOT kings. They were KING MAKERS. The wise men LOOKED for kings! (It has been historically documented) How had they heard about the King of the Jews? Approximately 500 years previous to this time, the Jewish people from the Kingdom of Judah were in exile in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, placed Daniel in charge of the wise men as the Chief Administration (Dan. 2:48). Daniel wrote when the Messiah would appear in Israel in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:26 – before the destruction of the Temple in

70 AD). 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. Fast forward to the time of the wise men's visit to Jerusalem to look for the king of the Jews. History teaches that their king, the Persian king, had been deposed. The wise men were looking for a new king. And so they traveled to JERUSALEM to find the One they had heard about from their ancestors through Daniel...the One Who would be the King of the Jews, JESUS! And, they brought the child gifts: Gold – symbolizing royalty – this Child will return as King! Frankincense – speaks of deity – this Child is God! Myrrh – was used to embalm the dead – this Child will die and be laid in a tomb! These gifts truly depict the Messiah Who is God, Who would die for sin, and Who will return and reign as King.

In the Christmas accounts in Luke with the shepherds, and in Matthew with the Magi, 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: His first coming to suffer and die, and His second coming to reign as King. We are reading the continuation of the one story of the Bible. The early chapters of Luke and Matthew reveal the expectations concerning the kingdom of God. There was hope concerning the coming King Who was connected directly to the promises God made to Abraham and to King David. This King, King Jesus, is the Son of David. Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom. JESUS will fulfill the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants and bring blessings – the blessings of SALVATION – to the Gentiles.

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In the early chapters of Matthew and Luke the literal OT expectation is affirmed. AND, this expectation sets the stage for the proclamations of John the Baptizer and Jesus that – “the kingdom of heaven (the kingdom of God) is near”! (Matt, 3:21 4:17).

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room, and Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing, and Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders, of His love.

QUESTIONS:

What was new to you?

What is the take-away from this lesson?

How is this impacting your understanding of the word of God?

Read the “If you disagree....” comment under the Suggested Homework. What is your view? What Scripture do you use to support your view?

How do you understand the “Kingdom of heaven/God” verbiage?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread Week 4’s handout with Scripture references.

Jot down observations, questions, and begin answering your questions from Scripture.

If you disagree with aspects of what was presented, write down your view and support it with Scripture.

Share what we’ve discussed (whether you agree or not) with at least one person.

Read Week 5’s handout when you receive it via Email.