

JESUS' INCARNATION

JROC – Week 3 – Joy To The World

December 11, 2022

Luke 1:5 - *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias... His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both husband and wife were from the priestly tribe.*

Zacharias means *REMEMBERED BY GOD!*

After 430 years of “silence,” of God not sending even one prophet to warn the Jewish people...after 430 years of the Jewish people hanging on to Malachi’s words that the Messiah would come (Mal. 3:1; Mal. 4:2)...the angel Gabriel was sent by God to tell Zacharias that he and Elizabeth would have a son who would be named John.

And John would be the herald for the Messiah. John would announce the Messiah Jesus Who would come as the ULTIMATE SACRIFICE for sin. The angel Gabriel came to Zacharias who was serving in the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of SACRIFICE! What a message God proclaimed to the world. We have a sacrifice theme laid out for us at Jesus First Coming!

AND, we are told in Matthew and Luke that 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! To marvel means to be awestruck!

Might they have known about the promises of the Messiah from the Hebrew Scriptures? It seems that the events of the 430 years following Malachi were increasing the anticipation for the One who would deliver them from Rome!

Jesus has already come to die for sin. Are we marveling at such a loving gift from Almighty God?

Luke 2:4 – Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to be registered for the worldwide census decreed by the Romans. 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 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.* This doesn’t make much sense unless you know what was written about the Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Firstly, 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 24/7 and could not obey the regulations in the Jewish law regarding washings, purification rites, and dietary regulations. What a powerful message God is sending to the world. God’s grace reaches down to everyone!

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.'*

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Why does Scripture speak of Bethlehem Ephrathah? There were two Bethlehem's in Israel...one in Galilee and the Bethlehem in Judea where Jesus was born.

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! The message of Christmas is a message of sacrifice!

In Ephrathah there was a tower called the "Tower of the Flock" harboring the sheep that would be sacrificed in the Temple in Jerusalem. The tower was called Migdal Eder (in the Hebrew). Migdal means "tower;" Eder means "flock."

Alfred Edersheim (Jewish believer now with the Lord) wrote a classic book entitled "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah." Edersheim recorded the writings of the Rabbis re: the Tower of the Flock: "It will be the place where the Messiah will be revealed."

Migdal Eder was not "the watchtower for the ordinary flocks. And, the shepherds who kept these sheep were men who specifically trained for the care of these special sheep. The shepherds needed to ensure that none of the lambs were hurt, damaged, or blemished.

We find the Tower of the Flock mentioned in Gen. 35:21 and Micah 4:8.

In the Genesis 35 passage, Jacob's wife, Rachel, gave birth to Benjamin (second child) at the site of/the location of the Tower of the Flock/Migdal Eder. And, in giving birth to Benjamin, Rachel died. Rachel's name means "ewe" – a mama sheep. 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.

In Micah 4:8 we are told that the kingdom will come 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? Rabbi Munk explained that Gen. 35:23 and Micah 4:8 speak of the Messiah. "He (Jacob) spread his tent beyond Migdal Eder, the place where King Messiah will reveal Himself...."

There has been much speculation re: Jesus' birthplace. Cave? No Biblical support. Stable? No – other than "Laid in a manger." There were mangers/feeding

troughs in this Tower of the Flock for the lambs who would be nurtured until they were sacrificed.

The Tower of the Flock was well-known in the Jewish culture. More significant...the tower was part of the sacrificial system that atoned for sin!!

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!

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

And then we read in this passage that the GLORY OF THE LORD shone around the shepherds. The glory of God filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in

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Jerusalem. We read of the glory of God departing from the temple in Jerusalem in the book of Ezekiel because of the abominations in Israel. HE'S BACK – the glory of God is back. John 1:14 – *The Word was made flesh and dwelled (He tabernacled) 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.*

Luke 2:10-11 - *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.* 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." These good tidings speak of forgiveness of sin. 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 (II Sam. 7 – the Davidic Covenant; Jer. 23:5; Psalms). The angel told the Jewish shepherds a Savior would be born. Being saved is a very Jewish teaching in the OT! (Isa. 45:22; Isa. 46:13; Isa. 64:5) The Hebrew word for salvation is "Yeshua"!

The Savior would be born? (Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6)

Luke 2:12 – *And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.* How is this a 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? How distinguishing is this sign? And, lying in a manger? That could be a bit easier. How many mangers could there have been? MANY! When people

traveled, they 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. Oftentimes there were mangers in the “livingrooms – in the main room of a home. How were the shepherds going to navigate?

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 – The shepherds were ready to move out, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the LORD has made known to us!” But, in what direction? Did the angel tell the shepherds where to find the Baby? NO! Did the shepherds ask for directions? NO! AND - all babies were wrapped in swaddling cloths? There were multiple mangers in the city?

Luke 2:16-18 - tells us that *they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.* ¹⁸ *And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.* How did they find the Baby?

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Think OT/Hebrew Scriptures. Think of what God required of the Jewish people re: sacrifices? The sacrifices had to be without blemish. Lambs born to ewes in the Tower of the Flock where the sacrificial lambs were kept were wrapped in swaddling cloths so as not to bruise themselves. They would no longer be eligible for Temple sacrifice. 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. And the swaddling cloths were swaddling bands/strips (root word for cloths in the Gk) And, the swaddled lambs were then laid in a stone feeding trough – a manger - to further protect them!

The swaddling cloths that the Babe was wrapped in were also swaddling bands/strips. And think of baby Jesus being laid in a stone feeding trough.

Yes, we say this was a lowly birth. But, it was much more. At Jesus death, His body was wrapped with strips of cloth and laid behind a stone in a stone tomb!

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 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! They found Him Who came at His first coming as the Suffering Servant - the Lamb destined to be sacrificed – the ultimate sacrifice for sin. He’s coming again, isn’t He?

Scripture speaks to a GAP between the Messiah's first coming and His second coming. Let's return to the Christmas account – but in the book of Matthew. The Magi appear on the scene following a gap of possibly two years from the time of Jesus' birth. And, we see the Magi, the wise men, visiting Jesus with a different agenda than the agenda of the shepherds.

The JEWISH shepherds were looking for the lamb to be sacrificed. The wise men weren't Jewish, they were Gentiles. The Gentile wise men saw the star when Jesus was born but 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 the wise men found Jesus in a house – NOT lying in a manger (Matt. 2:11). AND, He was a "Child," not a baby (Matt. 2:11).

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, ² saying, '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.' The Magi were looking for the King of the Jews!

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 time gap

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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 Magi? They were not kings. They were king makers. We read about Magi/wise men in the book of Daniel. The wise men were known as those who interpreted dreams (Dan. 2:1-4). However, they could not interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Nebuchadnezzar threatened to kill them. God gave Daniel the knowledge and interpretation of the King's dream. Nebuchadnezzar placed Daniel in the Chief Administrator role over the Magi (Dan. 2:48).

Daniel, inspired by God, wrote in the book of Daniel about when the Messiah would appear in Israel (Dan. 9:26 – before 70 AD). Do you think he might've shared that with the Magi?

Fast forward to the time of the Magi's visit to Jerusalem to look for the king of the Jews. And, they brought the child gifts:

Gold – symbolizing royalty. This Child Who will be King.

Frankincense – speaks of deity. This Child is God!

Myrrh – used to embalm the dead. This Child will die and be laid in a tomb and rise from the dead!

In the Christmas accounts in Matthew and Luke 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; His second coming to reign as King.

Are we marveling at God's amazing plan?

Are we fervently/excitedly anticipating His any moment return for us?

Why "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 Earth, the Savior reigns
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

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

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And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love

Are we singing of Jesus Suffering Servant role in this Christmas song or His Ruling and Reigning King role? Had you realized that "Joy To The World" is a Second Coming hymn? Share this with someone!