

TWO JOURNEYS TO BETHLEHEM

The entire course of world history was changed by the journey of two valiant women to Bethlehem. Separated in time by one thousand years, the first of these women became the mother of the Messianic dynasty - the House of David - and the other became the mother of the Messiah Himself.

The first, Ruth, was a young widow from Moab. After the death of her husband, she was desolate. Abandoned, and almost without hope, she had a choice to make: to return to her people in Moab or to go with her Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi, to the home of her deceased husband. She decided to set off towards Bethlehem with her mother in law. (Ruth 1.22) The second was Mary whose years journey (many years later) from her home county to Bethlehem would influence the course of history.

Though Ruth was not aware of it, the fate of the world was determined by her decision to go to Bethlehem. There she met a leader in Bethlehem, Boaz, who took her in, married her and made her his co-heir. (Ruth Chapter 4) There, she gave birth to a son, Obed, who became the father of Jesse and grandfather of King David who established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. David, this great-grandson of Ruth, was promised that one of his descendants would reign over the house of David and over all nations forever.

The destiny of the entire world hung on Ruth's decision: to identify with

her gentile heritage or to throw her lot in with the future of God's chosen people. She chose to make her destiny among the Jewish people. *"Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God."* (Ruth 1.16)

One thousand years later, the angel Gabriel came to a virgin in Nazareth named Mary (Myriam) with an announcement that she would be the mother of the Messiah - the promised heir of the house of David. (Luke 1.26-38) This Gabriel was the same angel that had helped Daniel to understand the timing of the coming of the Messiah. He showed Daniel that the Messiah would come and bring an end to sacrifice, and inaugurate a covenant of righteousness within 490 years of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem. (Daniel 9.24-27) Earlier, Micah foretold that this promised Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5.2)

Some time after Mary of Nazareth, had received this earth shaking calling to be the mother of the Messiah, a decree was issued from the Roman Emperor that everyone in Israel should go to the home of their ancestors to fill in census documents. (Luke 2.1-4) It is likely that many patriotic Israelis regarded this census as an unnecessary intrusion from the imperial government which should not be obeyed. However, Mary and her fiancée Joseph decided to obey the decree of the Emperor and go to Bethlehem to be registered. Again, unknown to her, like her ancestor Ruth a thousand years earlier, the fate of the world hinged on her

decision to travel to Bethlehem. For, were it not for the Emperor's unwelcome decree which required her go to Bethlehem she probably would not have gone there.

Mary could have registered herself and her family in Nazareth but instead she chose to return to Bethlehem the city of her ancestors to be enrolled. She identified herself with the city of her ancestors, David and Ruth.

While there, she gave birth to the promised Messiah, Yeshua. Were He not born in Bethlehem the prophetic scripture that required the Messiah be born there, would not have been fulfilled, and He would not have met the credentials given in scripture for identifying the Messiah.

The journey of Ruth from the famine ravaged land of Moab to Bethlehem a place of plenty, was a journey - from barrenness to fruitfulness - from desolation to comfort - from abandonment to an inheritance. Boaz, her kinsman redeemer, from Bethlehem made her fruitful and gave her an inheritance with the people of Israel.

For Ruth, Bethlehem (the town of bread) became a place of provision and security and also a place of unimaginable fruitfulness. This is why Bethlehem, the house of bread is also called Ephrathah, which means 'fruitful'. Through union with her kinsman redeemer from Bethlehem, Ruth became a secure and fruitful heir. She was transformed from a woman without a hope or future to a woman of destiny.

The Path From Misery To Refuge

Our journey from desolation to refuge begins when we allow Yeshua of Bethlehem to take us in. He welcomes us

to share His inheritance - to discover the hope of HIS calling. (Ephesians 1.18) He invites us out of the misery of our past failure, disappointment, heartbreak and despair, into a life of fruitfulness and destiny with His. (Matt. 11.28) Our part is to take the journey out of self and our own plans into Him and His plans.

At Bethlehem, Ruth found safety and security. One thousand years later, in the same fields of Bethlehem, where one woman, Ruth found refuge at the feet of Boaz, a group of shepherds received a vision of angels announcing that there is refuge for the whole world at the feet of Jesus.

Now there were in the same country, shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold an angel of the Lord stood before them ..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. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2.8-11)

Let the word ring out to every nation and to all people - that this King from Bethlehem welcomes all from every culture and background, those who have been battered and wounded by life, those who have been wounded by their own sin and the sin of others. This great Redeemer King, this descendant of Boaz and Ruth, not only forgives but gives perfect restoration to those who come to Him. and an everlasting inheritance to all who come to Him for refuge and provision.

That is why His birth is a message of great joy - for all people - for all time! The storm tossed people of this troubled world need to hear it loud and clear.

WHAT OTHER SAY

Celebrating Christmas

"The true significance of Christ's birth is

- God became man (through His incarnation John 1:14);
- so that man may become God (through our regeneration to become His sons in life and in nature but not in the Godhead. (John 1:12-13, 1 Pt. 1-3, 1 Cor. 8:6). - Watchman Nee

Christmas - A Pagan Feast Or An Opportunity For True Worship

To celebrate Christmas without inviting Him to enter our hearts and lives more fully is to celebrate a pagan feast, but to draw near to Him is the greatest form of worship.

Christ's Gift To Us

Christ's gift to us is to come within us to live the life He asks of us.

What is impossible to you as an imitator of Christ becomes possible to you as a participant **IN CHRIST**. Christ nullifies the forces of your fallen life, and then communicates to you a divine life. This life (*His life in you*) does the Christian living (when we let Him). This life becomes available to you when you were born again. Without Jesus' unique life *doing it all*, I can do nothing!

- Bone of His bone by F.J Hugel

Enemy Loving Love.

As long as enemy-loving love is not preached or practiced, Christians will be at war with themselves and with the world. We must escape the cycle of hatred through intentionally loving our enemies

"Never cease loving a person, and never give up hope for him, for even the prodigal son who had fallen most low, could still be saved; the

bitterest enemy and also he who was your friend could again be your friend; love that has grown cold can kindle." - Soren Kierkegaard

Suffering Is A Necessary Part Of Life

(The misery of Covid has confronted us squarely with the inevitability of suffering even among those of the highest faith)

Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself.

Tribulations cannot cease until God either sees us remade or sees that our remaking is now hopeless. - C.S. Lewis



Hanukah - The Undying Flame

When we look at the Hanukkah Menorah, we see a beautiful portrait of our Messiah. Each candle is specially lit by the *shamash* - the servant candle. Scripture teaches us that Jesus is God's *shamash* - the servant of the Lord (Matt. 12:18). And this *shamash* is the Light of the world. He is the true light that came into the world and illuminates us all. He is the eternal and undying flame, which spreads its light one candle at a time.

And it is the Light of the world, the *shamash*, the one who in the Temple boldly declared Himself to be the Light of The World, (exactly on the Feast of Hanukah.)

The rededication of the Temple was a turning point in Jewish history. But that magnificent Temple no longer stands. The New Testament teaches that each one of us each individual illuminated by *the Shamash* is now the temple of God. How can we dedicate or rededicate this personal temple of God?

The answer is found in the two prominent symbols of Hanukkah, *light* and *oil*. Do we let our light so shine before men that they glorify our Father in heaven? Or do we choose to hide our light under a bushel (Matt. 5:15-16)? *Steven Ger is founder and director of Sojourner Ministries.*

NEWS

Dear Friends,

As we write this newsletter we are a few weeks home after two months of ministry in **Ireland**, where we had a very fruitful time.

In spite of the rigors of Covid lockdowns meetings were well attended. We also experienced a freshness of the Spirit and many were encouraged by the opportunity to meet again after months of lockdown.

God is on the move and we felt His presence mightily thanks largely to your prayers,

Ministry In Florida

America and all nations are going through hard times. Many are also disappointed at the turn of political events. At such times it is easy to get drawn into strife over political differences and opinions about government decisions. What should be the Christian response when we are faced with government actions and mandates we do not support?

Firstly, we are called to pray for those in authority. Secondly the scriptures tell us to submit to secular government unless it requires us to compromise our faith or moral standards. Thirdly, as followers of Jesus we are called to refrain from strife and make a conscious decision to walk in love and goodwill towards those we disagree with - as David puts it: "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity." (Psalm 37.1-2)

Fourthly we speak where we think it appropriate and allow others (without argument) the freedom to have different opinions from ours.

We are glad to be able to continue our local ministry here in Stuart, Florida where

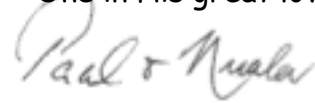
we are blessed by some strong congregations of believers which create a culture of faith.

We are starting a new season of studies and fellowship in the home of **Frank & Chris Storino in Stuart**, and continue with our weekly meetings in **Ft. Pierce** in the home of **Lanell Williams**. We continue to minister on a weekly basis at **Good Samaritan Ministries in Port St. Lucie** and regularly at **Victory In Christ International in Jupiter**, and at **Love and Hope In Action** in Stuart.

Christmas for many is a time of secular festivity and worldliness, but for us it is a time to continue to celebrate the gift of God and His goodness in taking us into His care and filling us with His life. The generosity of the Lord in giving us His best and sharing His all with us, is stunning. Remember Jesus emptied Himself of His heavenly position to give Himself **FOR US** and **TO US**. Let us also look to empty ourselves of self at this time. (Phil. 2)

Our deepest thanks to all who help us with your encouragement, prayers and financial support. This ministry does not function without you. Let us know if we can serve you in any way in 2022.

One in His great love and service,



Feel Free to copy and share