

The Babe of Bethlehem

According to the Gospel of Matthew, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, certain wise men from the east (perhaps Persia—which is Iran today) came to Israel’s capital city, Jerusalem, in search of the one “born King of the Jews” (2:1-12). These mystic messengers said they had seen His star in the east and had come to worship Him.

King Herod, who was Idumean and not Jewish, was an appointed caretaker-king over Judea and answerable to Rome. Thus, he was understandably “troubled” by these stately guests from the east and gathered “all the chief priests and scribes of the people together” and inquired where a future king of Israel might be born. They determined it would be in Bethlehem of Judea, as indicated by the Prophet Micah:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, although you are small among the tribes of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me one who will be ruler over Israel. His origins are from of old, From ancient days” (Mic. 5:2, MEV).

The Messiah of the Jews

Not only did this messianic passage link Bethlehem with a future ruler over Israel but also, by inference, with the great King David, whose birthplace was also Bethlehem, a tiny village just south of Jerusalem.

Ron Cantor, a contemporary Messianic Jewish communicator, describes the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 53, as the “king of Jewish messianic prophecy.” His three-part video teachings call it “the clearest description that the Hebrew Scriptures offer concerning the identity of the have counted nearly 40 predictions in Isaiah 53, and Yeshua [Jesus] fulfilled them all!”

The apostle Paul reminds us that though the majority of those

who are Jews—by physical descent from the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel)—failed to obtain right standing with God by their physical zeal and religious enthusiasm to obey the Law, their rejection of the gospel mystery and message is not total; nor is it final (Rom. 11).

The righteousness of God is in Christ Jesus, who is the end [goal, aim, purpose] of the law. (See Romans 10:4 AMP) This is a “stumbling stone” (9:23) to those under the Law but a life-giving truth to “everyone who believes” (10:4-10)—including non-Jews.

“The earlier revelation was intended simply to get us ready for the Messiah, who then puts everything right for those who trust him to do it” (Rom. 10:4, The Message).

Savior of the Gentiles

The young baby was soon visited by non-Jewish (Gentile) wise men from the east of Israel (Matt. 2:1-12). The couple from Nazareth were remaining in Judea with the child for the prescribed weeks after the birth of their firstborn son to dedicate him at the Temple in Jerusalem. They were living in a house, rather than the stable, when the Gentile wise men found them with the help of the “star which they saw in the east.”

There they “fell down and worshipped him” and opened their “treasures” to honor the newly born king. These expensive gifts were perhaps the resources God provided the Holy Family to meet their later needs, as foreign visitors while in Egypt (vv. 13-15), where they fled after an angel’s warning of King Herod’s intent of infanticide. These Gentiles exhibited more than a courtly gesture but truly worshipped the Jewish Savior named “Immanuel,” which is interpreted, “God with us” (1:23).

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains that by a “new and living way,” the New Covenant by Christ’s blood and body (Heb. 10:20), even Gentiles can be “grafted in” to the inheritance of God, that is in Christ Jesus (-24).

The Old Covenant was completed at the cross and the New Covenant was consummated by Christ's death and resurrection. He nailed our sins and fleshly efforts to keep the Law to the cross (Col. 2:13-15) and now Jews and Gentiles alike come to God through faith in the righteous effects of the shed blood of Jesus and the residing power of the Holy Spirit.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Not only is this "Babe of Bethlehem" regarded as the Jewish Messiah and revealed as the Savior of Gentiles, but He is also the returning "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

When He returns with His saints, He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked:

"Do not marvel at this. For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29, MEV).

For now, we eagerly anticipate and look forward to when God will join the living saints together with ones who have already died. The living ones, at that time, will be "caught up," "snatched," "raptured," (Gr. *harpazo*) and taken out of this world by a force greater than the force of gravity. When the dead in Christ are called from their graves, the living ones will join them to meet the Lord and be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17)!

At this Advent season, we look back to the arrival of the Babe of Bethlehem. We marvel at His life, ministry and miracles while we solemnly observe His death, burial and resurrection. But for now, we look ahead and eagerly anticipate His second advent!

The book of Hebrews speaks to this time of meaningful

anticipation when it says, “and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to save those who eagerly wait for Him” (Heb. 9:28). {eoa}

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