

JESUS IS THE FRUITFUL BREAD OF LIFE

MICAH 5:1-5

The Messiah Will Be Born at Bethlehem

Now gather yourself in troops, o daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

The Coming Messiah

"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." Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; And this One shall be peace.

This is one of many prophecies concerning Christ Jesus in the Old Testament. It is primarily regarded as being the prophesy that spoke of the birthplace of our Lord and Savior Jesus-that being Bethlehem. Nevertheless, there is so much more to bless us with this passage of Scripture, to encourage us and that we can rejoice in what God has already done but also in what He is doing presently and what He is going to do. There were a multitude of prophecies in the Old Testament that spoke of the coming Messiah. Then, in God's perfect time, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior was born of the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit that led to Jesus telling us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

While Christ Jesus said on the cross, "it is finished", as His perfect sacrifice for our sins was accomplished, the Apostle Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that God through Christ is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, as He is continuing His working towards building His eternal kingdom, seeking out those who are lost, and then perfecting us in Christ Jesus as He draws us closer to Him, to know Him, trust Him, and then honor Him. That all takes place as we believe on Christ Jesus for being the only begotten of the Father, sent by God to die on a cross for our sins and then raising from the grave on the third day, conquering death, and then we too who believe on Him, then turn to Him for forgiveness of our sins against God and to then receive Him into our hearts so as to be, as Jesus put it, "born-again". Believe on Christ Jesus and then receive Him. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**) To receive Christ Jesus does mean that we are saved, and sanctified (set apart by God in His holiness), and Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but He is also making us to be like Christ, as He works in us His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. We are then promised by Jesus, of which He said "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (**John 14:2-3**) We are then believing on Christ and receiving Him, yet will be fully be received by Him, on the other side of this lifetime. I don't know about you but I don't really concern myself with having a mansion but that Jesus is preparing a place for me, for you, in Him, in His eternal kingdom. Why do I mean by that? I can trust that whatever God has in store for His children is going to be awesome because He is perfect in all His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**), just as His Word tells us. Jesus tells us, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." I want to be with Jesus, my Lord, God, and Savior! How about you? There is nothing in this world that compares to the goodness and glory of God!

"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.**" **Matthew 2**, quotes this passage of Scripture from Micah, and then tells us the story of Herod finding out about the Christ being born in Bethlehem and then King Herod orders the execution of all male children under the age of two years old. Yes, sadly that is the world of which we live in. That too though was prophetically told to happen as Matthew quotes Jeremiah in saying, "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." (**Matthew 2:18**) We can have the joy of the Lord in this time of year, and all throughout the year, as joy is a fruit of the Spirit, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control". (**Galatians 5:22-23**) But in this time of year, as we hear the beautiful story of baby Jesus, and the wise men, and the star of Bethlehem, etc. we are also reminded of the shepherds, that had an angel proclaim, "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. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." 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, goodwill toward men!" (**Luke 2:10-14**)

Yet, at the same time, the world and those of the world rages. It is at that time of King Herod's rage, that Joseph was visited by an angel in a dream and was told to take Mary and baby Jesus and go to Egypt. That too was prophesied of, by Hosea, and quoted by Matthew saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." For after the threat of taking Jesus' life was over, for the time being, after the death of Herod, we are told that once again Joseph was visited by an angel in a dream and he was told to take the family and head back home but this time to the region of Galilee, to which they settled in Nazareth.

Bethlehem had several names, to which it was initially called Ephrath or Ephrathah, which meant fruitful. Later, after God had delivered His people from Egypt through the leadership of Moses, and the Israelites had finally made it into the "promised land" (after 40 years of wandering around in the wilderness because of their sins against God), it was referred to as a land "flowing with milk and honey" (**Exodus 3:8**). Ephrathah eventually was renamed Bethlehem, or Bethlehem Ephrathah. That is what our passage of Scripture in **Micah 5** calls it. Bethlehem though means house of bread. Beth meaning house and lehem (lekh-em) meaning bread. Bethlehem Ephrathah then means fruitful house of bread. How appropriate for our Lord, God, and Savior to be born in the fruitful house of bread as Jesus IS the fruitful house of bread! It indeed was a fruitful place for the growing of grains as we learn from the story of Ruth gleaning from the field of Boaz, of which we know from the story in the book of Ruth, that Boaz and Ruth ended up being the great-grandparents of King David. King David, of course, is listed in both genealogies of Jesus' that are found in **Matthew 1** and **Luke 3**.

As a side note, Matthew has the lineage of Christ starting at Abraham, who was promised by God that "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (**Genesis 22:18**) The genealogy then goes through King David and then through King Solomon, the son given to King David from Bathsheba. Matthew then gives the account of the angel assuring Joseph that the child she was bearing was of the Holy Spirit and to take her as his wife and not to put her away. The genealogy in Matthew then is considered to be the genealogy that went through Jesus' step-father, Joseph. The genealogy in Luke traces all the way back to Adam and goes through King David and then David's son Nathan. In the narrative of Luke though we read of the angel speaking to Mary and telling her about her child that she was going to bear. It is then presumed that the genealogy in Luke is that of Mary, as it even states with regards to Jesus' earthly father as "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph". I found it interesting that Matthew (also called Levi) was a tax collector, and went by the letter of the law as a tax collector and referred to the legal father of Jesus as being Joseph. Contrary to that is in Luke, being a physician, would have looked at the true

birth parents of Jesus. One last interesting tidbit that I considered was in the four gospel accounts of Christ. I already mentioned Matthew and Luke and then there was also Mark and John. Mark is considered by a majority of Bible scholars to have been heavily influenced by the Apostle Peter, if Mark was not fully giving Peter's narrative account, and then John of course was written by "the one Jesus loved" as John put it. John and Peter were though clearly closest to Jesus and in their passion for Jesus. Neither Mark or John tells the story of Jesus lineage or birth but Matthew and Luke do. While the genealogy of Christ Jesus is most important, yet what we are learning, in our fellowship in Christ, is to know Him. Appropriate it was then for the town of Bethlehem or Bethlehem Ephrathah being called the fruitful house of bread, and as being the birthplace of Christ. Jesus tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and then "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (John 15:8) The Apostle John, in describing what He saw of the New Jerusalem, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, he says "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Revelation 21:22) Correspondingly, Jesus is the Bread of Life, as Jesus proclaimed, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35) Ultimately, Jesus IS the House of Bread! The Fruitful House of Bread! It is quite amazing that if your heart is set on seeking Jesus, to know Him, trust Him, and honor Him, He begins to reveal Himself to you in ways that you weren't even expecting. As we seek for knowledge and understanding of God, and that He is to be our Lord, God, and Savior, He expects for us TO know, trust, and honor Him, and He gives us the Wisdom to live according to His perfect ways. Christ Jesus, you will find, can be found throughout the Scriptures, just as you can find references or prophecies of Christ from Genesis to Revelation. Also, you begin to experience that the Word of God is truly living and active and that He begins to become you, as you earnestly seek Him and His Ways.

Bethlehem was also referred to as Bethlehem in Judah (1 Samuel 17:12), which speaks of Christ Jesus being the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who was the only one in heaven worthy to open the scroll with the seven seals. "But one of the elders said to me [John], "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." (Revelation 5:5) The account of the birth of Christ Jesus in Luke also has Luke refer to Bethlehem as the city of David. While Jerusalem was most prominently referred to as the city of David, Bethlehem was though the birthplace of King David. That ties in with what an angel of the Lord told Mary, the mother of Jesus. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name

Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33)

For us, this is just the beginning. As I like to say, as it is in my heart and in His Word, it just gets better and better. I'm not talking about the circumstances of our daily lives to which there is pain and sorrow, tears, and grief, death and the loss of loved ones. As the Word tells us, "now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." (Romans 13:11) Every day we get close to our Redemption in Christ Jesus. Every day we get that much closer to what the Apostle John tells us, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2) Every day we are that much closer to being fully in the glory and goodness of God, to see the face of God, to see our precious Lord, God, and Savior!

"And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth;"

Jesus said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." (John 12:26) "Where I am, there My servant will be also." When you get to know Jesus, to trust Him, and to honor Him with your whole life, by loving God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, to love others as God loves them, there is nothing that satisfies, nothing more fulfilling, nothing more of a blessing to us than to be with Jesus, to be near Him, in His presence and to also want that for others. "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. **God Himself will be with them and be their God.** And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:3-8)

We indeed will overcome in Christ Jesus as we get to know Him, trust Him, and honor Him. We are promised to inherit all things, as the children of God are joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Do you want God to be our Lord, God, and Savior? Do you want His Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption? Do you want to be wherever Jesus is?

“For 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.” (**Isaiah 9:6**) And Jesus is our Fruitful Bread of Life, from this time forth and forever more!