

## Anticipation

Brett: Maybe we have difficulty anticipating the coming of Christ because we have never experienced the longing that the people of Israel felt during the thousands of years that they waited for the coming of their Messiah. I wonder what that was like...to believe for so long, and hope, and wonder if maybe in your lifetime He'd come. This promised One - this Messiah - the one your great grandparents believed would really show up some day. I'd love to talk with one of those guys, wouldn't you? Someone who knew the promise - believed that the Messiah would come - and was still waiting with anticipation.

Jason: (Walks onto stage carrying a sack of belongings, and a walking stick.) Hey.

Brett: Hi. Can I help you?

Jason: Oh...thanks. Just passing through to Bethlehem.

Brett: Bethlehem? Like in Israel?

Jason: Bethlehem of Judea.

Brett: I'm Brett. (Extends hand to shake hands.)

Jason: Moshe. (Shakes hands.)

Brett: So Moshe, what's going on in Bethlehem?

Jason: C'mon. Don't you listen to the news? Caesar Augustus has ordered everyone in the entire Roman Empire to go back to his or her own hometown for a census. You know - count the people - make them pay taxes.

Brett: Yeah, right...the census. And you are a descendant of the town of Bethlehem?

Jason: From the house of David. What? Do I look like I'm from Canada or something?

Brett: So you're an Israelite?

Jason: All the way back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Brett: Wow...can I ask you something?

Jason: Sure.

Brett: I've been wondering about something. What goes through your mind when you think about the Messiah?

Jason: Well, growing up in my family, you couldn't **not** think about the Messiah. All four grandparents, my mother and father, they spoke of the God of Israel to us every day. When we would go for walks, or sit around the table...when we went to bed at night, and when we got up in the morning, always they would repeat to us the laws of God. Always they would say, "One day. Messiah will come."

I don't know when He will come. Sometimes, I wonder if we will know Him when He does come. But I hope...

Brett: What would you think if I told you that He will come in your lifetime?

Jason: (Laughing) How would you know? Not that I wouldn't want Him to come. We've been waiting for thousands of years! We could use some new leadership around here. I for one am ready for the Messiah to set up His kingdom. To overthrow this Roman Empire, and bring some justice to this place.

Brett: Yeah. There's not exactly going to be a big military take-over.

Jason: Then how is He going to set up His Kingdom?

Brett: It's not the kind of Kingdom you're expecting.

Jason: Listen, I don't know where you're getting your information, but I don't think we are talking about the same King here.

Brett: I'm talking about the one Isaiah prophesied about. You remember don't you? "A virgin will conceive a child..."

Jason: Of course I remember. Jewish children are required to memorize much of the Holy Scriptures. (finishing) "...She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel - "God is with us." (Isaiah 7:14) Are you trying to tell me that the Messiah is coming as a baby?

Brett: "For a child will be born to us, a son is given to us..."

Jason: "And the government will rest on his shoulders." (Isaiah 9:6) The King is coming as a baby?

Brett: I know this probably sounds wild to you, but that very baby is about to be born in Bethlehem. His parents - well his mom and step-dad - are on their way to Bethlehem for the same census that is taking you there.

Jason: I am looking for a grown-up King of the Jews - one who will rule from Jerusalem. Not a baby born in Bethlehem.

Brett: But he will come from Bethlehem. The prophet Micah wrote about it. " But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah."

Jason: "Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past." (Micah 5:2) The Messiah is the ruler who will come from Bethlehem?

I don't know. I'd like to believe that the Messiah will come soon, but I'm not really buying it. (pause to think) Born in Bethlehem. Since you seem to think you know so much, do you also happen to know what inn this baby be born in? Maybe I'll stop by.

Brett: There's not going to be any room in the inn. It's so crowded with the census and everything. Jesus will be born in an animal shelter.

Jason: Right. And I suppose that the Promised One of God - the Redeemer of Israel, will have a manger for his bed.

Brett: Actually , yeah.. His mom will wrap him up in strips of cloth, and lay Him in a manger, because there is no room for them in the inn.

Jason: This is so weird. What did you say his name would be?

Brett: Jesus.

Jason: I've got you there. Isaiah again: "These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6,7) Nothing about "Jesus" there. There are kids running all over Israel named "Jesus." The Messiah has royal names.

Brett: Jesus will be called all of those royal things too.

Jason: You're making him out to be a commoner, not a King. He sounds poor, not rich. What kind of Kingdom operates like that?

Brett: He's not going to rule like you expect Him too. But hear him out.

Jason: What about the one who will come before the Messiah? Malachi, the prophet wrote, "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me..." And Isaiah: " A voice of one calling: In the desert, prepare the way for the LORD, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." Where is this messenger? How can Messiah come before the one who will announce His coming?

Brett: You're right. The one who will announce His coming has just been born. His name is John.

Jason: His name is not John. It will be Elijah who announces the Messiah's coming. Every year at Passover, it is our custom to set a place for Elijah. His cup of wine is at the end of the table and we watch it carefully to see if the wine is stirred. In the year that the wine is stirred, we will know that Elijah is on his way. And the Messiah will soon follow.

Brett: You know the prophecies so well.

Jason: Every Jew does. Messiah is our greatest hope.

Brett: Jesus will teach that John comes in the spirit of Elijah. That he is indeed the forerunner of the Messiah.

Jason: I want to believe that the Messiah will come soon. We have waited for so long. You want to hear a weird story?

Brett: Sure.

Jason: Every year, my family and I go up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. There is this old guy there. The kids all call him "Crazy Simeon." He's always hanging around the temple. And you know what he believes? That he's not going to die until he sees the Messiah. He had some vision or something. Every year, we go up there, and he's still hanging on - to life - and to that crazy notion. He's getting pretty old. If it's true - that he really will see the Messiah in person before he dies, well, then maybe He is coming soon.

Brett: Watch. Look for what you know to be true. "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming...And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf."

Jason and Brett: "The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing!" (Isaiah 35:4-6)

Brett: Yes Moshe, He will do all of those things. He is coming as a baby. He will live among the common people. He will grow up and do the miracles that only God can do, and you will know that He is here. Your Messiah has come.

Jason: You cannot know how much I long for what you say to be true. Do you know what it is like to hang on to a promise that is hundreds of years old? It's coming true usually doesn't seem possible, but somewhere deep inside you keep hanging on - believing that what you hope for might really happen. Wanting more than anything to be a part of

that generation who lives on the other side of hoping - on the side of knowing.

Can you imagine? I'll bet that for a thousand years after Messiah comes - for two thousand - those generations of people who live on the side of knowing will look forward to celebrating His birth each year with incredible anticipation. Because they celebrate the knowing. I can only imagine the relief, the deep down - in your gut wild joy of knowing Messiah has come.

(Jason picks up things to leave.) I need to get to Bethlehem. Thank you. I don't always think about the Messiah coming...thanks for reminding me.

Brett: Thank you. (Jason leaves.) (Brett back to audience): For reminding us of the joy of living on the side of knowing. Of the deep down - in your gut wild joy of knowing Messiah has come.