

Heroes of Faith – A New Beginning

It all Begins with Jesus

Introduction:

1. The very definition of faith; “the assurance/substance of things hoped for, the conviction/evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1) is the _____ of our understanding or comprehension of God and His purposes.
2. From the beginning of time it was faith that made a person _____ before God as the Scriptures say; “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous” (Hebrews 11:4a - NASB)
3. It was because of the faith of Abraham that the Lord declared him _____ and chose to bless him. The Lord established a plan in which Abraham’s descendants (the children of promise) formed an entire people group that came to be known as the people of God. (Hebrews 11:8-21)
4. It was because of faith that Moses _____ God and led the people of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt back toward the Land of Promise. (Hebrews 11:24-29)
5. It was because of faith that others like Joshua and Caleb who in spite of tremendous opposition were compelled to _____ God and they led the people of Israel back into the Promised Land. (Hebrews 11:30-31)
6. It was because of faith that a king named David, who in spite of his personal failures, ruled over a kingdom and put his _____ in God that one day this kingdom would become the kingdom of our Lord. (Hebrews 11:32-40, II Samuel 7:8-29)
7. “And without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must **believe** that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)

A New Beginning

1. The New Testament announces and records the birth of Jesus Christ. The authors of the four Gospels provide us with specific detail and proof that He is the promised Messiah and Savior that the Old Testament prophets said would come.
 - The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said these words to her; “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High, and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David**; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and **His kingdom will have no end**” (Luke 1:30-33)
 - 1) When Mary questioned how this was possible since she was a virgin, the angel Gabriel answered; “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35)
 - 2) This fulfills what Isaiah prophesied would take place; “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name **Immanuel**.” (Isaiah 7:14)
 - 3) Isaiah also wrote these prophetic words; “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
 - 4) The Lord made this promise to King David which was fulfilled through Jesus; “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me **forever**; your throne shall be **established forever**” (II Samuel 7:16)
 - 5) The Apostle Paul will later write these words; “But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5)

- The record of the birth of Jesus is just as specific and detailed as was the announcement. This too was a fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets declared would take place.
- 1) The location of the birth of Christ was in a village called _____ which was about five miles south of Jerusalem.
 - 2) This place of birth was prophesied by the prophet Micah who wrote; “But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth from Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of **eternity**” (Micah 5:2)
 - 3) Even the **Magi** (probably Gentiles of a high position) came to Jerusalem after following the path of a star in in search of the “**King of the Jews**” who had been born so they could go to Him and _____ Him.
 - 4) In response to this; Herod questioned the Jewish religious leaders as to where the Messiah would be born and they replied; “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what had been written by the prophet....” (Matthew 2:5-6)
 - 5) Ironically and in my opinion a sad commentary about the religious leaders of the time was their lack of spiritual discernment. If they believed that the prophet Micah had the location of the birth correct – then why didn’t they go with the Magi to Bethlehem to worship Him also?
 - 6) Clearly Herod was so distraught that this Jesus (King of the Jews) might take his throne from him and rule in his place, that he set a plan in motion to kill all the children under the age of 2 to ensure that this didn’t happen.
 - 7) Herod fails in his attempt to kill Jesus as Joseph, Mary and Jesus are able to flee to Egypt for a time and then they eventually will return and will settle down in a city called _____. (Matthew 2:23)
2. Although the Gospel writers Matthew and Luke record the birth of Christ; the reality is He has always _____ because He is _____ and He is God! This is precisely what the writers of the New Testament believed and wrote for us to understand.

The Word is the Only Way

1. The apostle John begins his gospel account by clearly declaring that Jesus is God:

- “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4, NASB)
- The New Living Translation states it this way; “In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God and He was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that He didn’t make. Life itself was in Him and this life gives light to everyone” (John 1:1-4, NLT)
- John further states; “**And the Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14)

2. Jesus Himself declares; “I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6)

3. The Apostle John will write later in his first letter (epistle) which was probably written to the Seven Churches of Asia - these words about _____:

- “What was **from the beginning**, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands concerning the **Word of Life** – and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the **eternal life**, which was with the Father and was manifested to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ**. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (I John 1:1-4)
- “And we know that **the Son of God has come**, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is **true**, and we are in Him who is **true**, in His Son **Jesus Christ**. This is the **true God** and **eternal life**” (I John 5:20)

How Can We Know The Way?

1. When Nicodemus (a Jewish religious leader) approached Jesus at night out of fear from his fellow priests and leaders; He acknowledged that Jesus was from God and although at the time he didn't fully grasp how Jesus could perform the miracles and signs that He did, Nicodemus wanted to know more about Jesus.
 - Jesus responded to Nicodemus by saying; "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)
 - 1) This created a little dilemma for Nicodemus because he couldn't quite figure out what Jesus meant. Certainly it would be ludicrous to think that we could crawl back into our mother's womb and be born again that way!
 - 2) Now Nicodemus should have known better, being a devout religious leader and all. He was completely ignorant of what Jesus spoke.
 - 3) Nicodemus represented the mindset of the Jews of that time which was spiritual unbelief and a complete lack of knowledge.
 - 4) Jesus even rebuked Nicodemus for failing to see His point and failing to understand clearly who Jesus was.
 - 5) Jesus clears the matter up by saying these simple words; "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)
 - We are never told whether this simple truth resonated with Nicodemus and whether or not he genuinely believed in Jesus.
 - 1) We have one instance where Nicodemus rebukes the Pharisees for condemning Jesus without hearing Him. (John 7:50-51)
 - 2) Nicodemus was also present with Joseph of Arimathea at Jesus's burial
 - The one thing that is clear is that the **only way** a person can be born again is to _____ in Jesus (**The Way**) and that is the message of the Gospel. (John 3:16)

2. When the woman came to draw water from the well she met Jesus who sitting by the well about the sixth hour - approx. 6pm. (John 4:1-26)
- In the case of Nicodemus, the meeting with Jesus was planned by Nicodemus – but this meeting with the Samaritan Woman was planned by the Lord.
 - The woman was a “_____” which meant she was of mixed blood (part Jewish and part Gentile) and she was not a “_____” person like Nicodemus.
 - 1) She thought it was strange that Jesus (a Jew) would have any dealings with her since she was a Samaritan.
 - 2) She was not a “religious” person but she had enough knowledge to grasp that Jesus had an important spiritual message to share with her.
 - 3) She led a life of immorality – but that was all about to change!
 - The woman came to the well seeking water to drink that would satisfy the craving of her _____ but Jesus offered her “**living water**” (**eternal life**) that would satisfy the craving of her _____.
 - Like so many people (including Nicodemus), the Samaritan woman was aware of a coming Messiah; “The woman said to Him, I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us” (John 4:25)
 - It is what she did after hearing the response by Jesus; “Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He”, that revealed her faith. (John 4:26)
 - After her encounter with Jesus she returned to her village and testified to them that she had met the Messiah and this resulted in many others believing in Jesus also; “From that city many Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, He told me all things that I have done” (John 4:39)
 - The woman at the well is proof that religion, social or moral status is not what makes us right before God – what makes us right with God is faith in Jesus.

The Followers of the Way

1. One of the greatest proofs that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior, the Word, the Way, the Truth and the Life is the _____ of those who followed Him:
 - After meeting Jesus for the first time it was Andrew (who later became one of the 12 apostles) who said this to his brother Simon; “We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ)” (John 1:41)
 - Nathaniel, also known as Bartholomew (who later became one of the 12 apostles) said; “Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel” (John 1:49)
 - Peter said this to Jesus when asked who he thought Jesus was; “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:18)
2. After Jesus died and rose again, He appeared to the disciples and said these words; “All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20)
3. Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus said to the disciples; “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)
 - With these marching orders, the apostles will gather themselves together to select/affirm a replacement for Judas Iscariot and shortly thereafter will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver the Gospel to the world.
 - It will be these disciples who will turn the world upside down for Christ
4. These followers of Jesus (The Way, the Truth and the Life) will preach and teach the same truths that Jesus taught and as a result, the Lord will establish what will become known as the church. (Matthew 16:18)
5. This study will explore the faith of these disciples, the growth of the church and the faith of those who continue to this day to follow the Way.....stay tuned!