



Captive to the Word, Free in the Holy Spirit

Millbrook Messenger

December 2010

THE STAR STILL SHINES!

Balaam's prophecy recorded in Numbers 24:17 states, "There shall come a star out of Jacob". Over the centuries the Jews continue to live in that hope as they wait for the Messiah. The month of December is the traditional time for many people as they look to the star and the story it represents. Over the centuries astronomers have looked to ancient manuscripts and the heavens to gather an understanding of the star that led astrologers to Bethlehem two thousand years ago. Theologians should focus on the nature and character of God for their understanding. The Creator, the God of Israel who is like no other, is a living and 'personal' God. In His love and sovereignty His sign for the "least of these", the shepherds, is angelic beings. The chosen, the elect, receive a glimpse of how 'personal' the universe really is. It were angels that led "wise shepherds" (because they obeyed) to Bethlehem. They were stimulated by a divinely initiated curiosity. In contrast, human wisdom's representatives followed a less personal revelation in coming to Bethlehem. Ultimately, all human quests for wisdom bow at the manger of Him who is the Wisdom (Sophia) of God. His name is Jesus.

The first book of Moses in chapter one (14-19) tells us that the stars were created on the fourth day. This past week NASA released a statement that new discoveries suggest that the number of stars is infinitely greater than previously thought. Their number appears to be even much greater than our national debt; there is a "rising star" story of a different kind!

God's Covenant of Grace recorded in Gen 3:15 reemerges in God's promise to Abraham in Gen 15. As God invites Abraham to count the stars, Abraham is reminded that his descendants shall be of similar multitude. It makes us wonder, was it a "cloudy evening" when God invited Abraham to look up? Or was it, as I suspect, a crystal clear night that showed an inkling of what recent NASA photos speak off?

The cosmic entity captured in the "star of Bethlehem" is long gone. It was "rising in the East" and perhaps returned to its place among the myriad of stars and heavenly bodies. Yet in another sense, the Star still shines.

The star that came out of Jacob is, for Christians, the person of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God. He is the fulfillment of prophecy, the One in whom the fullness of God Himself resides. Such a star must radiate quite a "shine".

However, the star of Jacob invites us in the first place not to look at the heavenlies but at the earth. Then, in Google style fashion, zero in on our land, our communities, our homes,

and ultimately our own souls. At each click of the mouse we are invited to ask the question, "Is the star still shining?" Do we each experience the effects of that divine cosmic light?

Yes, the star still shines! Yet what it reveals and illuminates does not always provide reason for joy or peace. This past week a judge in Oklahoma has blocked an attempt by the state to uphold a ban on Sharia law. The appeal came from Muslims who want Koranic law to be included in accounting for and justifying their actions. The whole Western world, including our own nation, has largely lost the awareness that our "rights and freedoms", as well as responsibilities, have their origin in the wisdom of the star of Jacob! Our collective defiant stance comes at great peril to the freedoms that we (still) enjoy. Yes, the Star still shines, and what it reveals is sobering.

In our communities the star of Jacob reveals the often brutal truth and reality that "we reap what we sow". Turmoil is birthed in darkness; it is the culture and the atmosphere of hell. Yes, the star still shines and calls us to repentance as we are faced with the consequences of our ideas whose origin is in human wisdom.

The star still shines over His Church. Those who see observe the need for change. The "Light" came into the world so that the Church could go out into the world--a dark place to be sure--but where else is light most effective? Even as wise men and wise shepherds were brought to a common site and sight, both departed to their respective worlds. The Church had forgotten why it "gathers". We gather in the "light/shine of His glory" in order to depart. To let His star shine through us and illumine the dark night that is, paradoxically, evident in the noon day sun!

The star of Bethlehem is gone. The star of Jacob lives. It shines for those who walk with the Messiah in the shine of His glory. They walk in love. They celebrate that the light of that star reveals in their own life the reminder of and necessity for Grace.

The star still shines! Look around: there is work to do! Paul reminded the Thessalonians to "gather together". Like a cordless flashlight battery pack, we gather to be recharged in order to go forth and let His star shine through us. Is there sufficient light in you and me to direct people to Bethlehem?

Shalom,

PJ....a stumbling pilgrim on a breathtaking journey following the shining star!

The other morning I woke up early and had trouble going back to sleep. I thought I would use this time to thank the Lord for the many things with which He has blessed me. The problem was I couldn't stop. I started with the fact that I woke up to another day and continued on from there. I started to think about every breath I take and every beat of my heart is a gift from Him. He has blessed me with a wonderful wife. The fact that I can get out of bed and walk is a blessing from Him. I have a warm home and food in the kitchen because of Him. He has blessed me with a car that works the way that He created it. I enjoy playing golf and He has blessed me with the ability to play well and friends to play with. He has blessed me with the ability to comfortably retire from a career that I loved. I have a great relationship with my mother-in-law, again a blessing from Him. He has blessed me with a daughter, a son-in-law and five grandchildren who follow the Lord. He has even blessed me with leukemia that has not had to be treated for nine years. When I was diagnosed, I heard the Lord tell me that He would heal me of this disease. However, it didn't happen right away like I wanted it to happen. He has used these nine years to teach me that things happen in His time not mine. I still believe that He will heal me, and I have learned to pray every night for this healing, but He has shown me that I must pray in patience, trust and faith. He has blessed me with this time in which I have the disease, but I have not had to have any treatment. It is almost fun to watch how frustrated the doctor is trying to figure out what is going on in my body. Another blessing is, it has allowed me to tell the doctor that it is the Lord's plan. These are only the highlights of the ways I have been blessed, and if I included all the blessings this article would be way too long. This list doesn't even include all the things around me in creation: flowers, grass, trees, babies, stars, moon, etc.

As Christmas approaches, I challenge you to do the same thing. Just sit down somewhere quiet and start listing all the things that He has blessed you with. You will find the list enormous. Even some things that you don't think of as blessings, if you think about them are actually blessings. The more often you do this, the more joy you will have in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. A great time to do this is just before coming to worship. This is one way to prepare your heart for true worship. When you arrive at church you will find a great desire in your heart to praise the Lord, and that is what worship is all about.

“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” I Corinthians 8:6

My Christmas wish for our church... "God's grace be with you all."

The Living Bible – Hebrews 13: 25

Don Johnston

My Christmas wish for Millbrook is that we will continue to receive and acknowledge God's generous blessings.

Sharon Johnston

I pray that there will be encouragement for each other and prayer for each other throughout the coming year.

Jane Serber

"For the Lord will bless His people with peace." Psalm 29:11

I wish you PEACE!

Rachel Ebrahimzadeh

Many blessings and good wishes to all of you from me and my family! We have had so many blessings to our church this year and you can see Jesus at work in our church and through the community. I can't wait to see what else He has in store for Millbrook. Have a joyful, prayerful and safe Christmas holiday and keep Jesus in your head and heart throughout the New Year!

Love to you all.

Lou Ann Johnson

Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you for our church. We know you sacrificed your Son that we might have life, and sent your Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us. Lord, fill us with your Spirit that we can be like a "city on a hill" for our members and neighborhood. May your light shine in us and on us to fulfill your will for this body of believers. I pray we continue to love and encourage one another and bring glory to your blessed name.

In Jesus name we pray.

Judy Ingoldsby

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him Above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." (Doxology) Millbrook! Praise God!

Linda Lawless

During the regular business meeting of Session on November 30, 2010 the following actions were taken:

approval of Chris Nickel as groundskeeper for a monthly salary.

approval of the Finance Team report for the final budget of 2011.

approval of days off for Robert Hyatt of December 27 to December 31, 2010.

approval of the use of Westminster Hall for Restoring Souls graduation on December 20, 2010.

approval of allowing Brian Stewart to substitute as facilitator for Tim Lockwood's class.

approval of placing Cheryl Lugo, Tyler Pellanda and Mary Miller on the inactive members list.

approval of allowing Brian Stewart to keep his classroom key.

approval of holding the annual congregational meeting for reports during a potluck.

approval of a combined worship service on December 12, 2010, beginning at 1:00 PM.

- Kathy Oakley's Mom - terminally ill.
- Sarah Vierra - back pain.
- Joanne Voss - healing for her broken foot.
- Stella Medin - home from St. Agnes, needs continued healing and strength.
- Hazel Powers - leg pain.
- Bertha Young - continued healing for her leg.
- Jeff Arnold - continued healing from brain surgery.
- Norma Keck - for continued strength and health.
- Mary Quinones - for improved ability to swallow following treatment for throat cancer.
- Linda Trachman - fighting liver cancer.
- Our elderly, sick and shut-in members
- Our Missionaries: Craig & Jennifer, Herbert & Tamara, Marissa, Ed & Jo, Tommy & Fatimah, Mike & Heather, Scott & Leslie.
- The Persecuted Church around the world
- Military Personnel & families
- Our country, elected officials and leaders.

Thank You!!!

Thank you to all who contribute to Millbrook being a community life center. Thank you to all teachers, prayer warriors, choir & musicians, ushers, those who assist in multi-media and finance, team members, officers, and volunteers.

And Thank You!!!

Restoring Souls Ministry (RSM) is the umbrella organization over LOT. We thank Brian Stewart and his team for the many projects they undertake on the Millbrook campus.

Visit any small town or village across Europe, you will find at its center a church building with a steep spiral, a symbol of being at the 'center' of communal life, and pointing heavenward.

Millbrook, in its own way is at the center of our community. God created His church to be a community life center. That is why His son came, suffered and died.

This center is for every "tribe, tongue and nation", a kind of Noah's Ark as it were, with a variety of species. We saw this in very concrete terms last week as we celebrated THANKSGIVING. Opening the doors to the public at 10 am, souls started wandering in. Snacks & drinks were ready, as were a variety of board games.

The turkeys stopped "gobbling" at 2pm. They were carved and eaten as part of a meal so plentiful and diverse, it alone testified to God's providence. We were reminded that November 1620 was also a cold season, a time in which people experienced hardships. It was also a time that brought people together. As always, motives may vary. However, then and now, as long as the Church exists, there will be those who gather, share and eat, motivated by the God of Grace and the love of Jesus.

There was a "camp fire" fueled by love that radiated our Fellowship Hall and beyond. Let's turn the heat up!

Thank you for your prayers, faith and works.

PJ

Christmas Greetings

From our homes and office we wish all of Millbrook a blessed Christmas and an exciting New Year with Jesus.

PJ



Millbrook is not Congress.

The challenging economic times has meant that all staff are seeing a salary reduction for next year. The level of commitment and joy will not diminish.

All Men Invited ~ January 9th

All men are invited to the Fireside Room after church on January 9th. We will have lunch and discuss the men's ministry at Millbrook. Questions? Call Pastor Jerry, 227-5355 or 908-8721.

December 12th ~ Worship at 1:00 pm

Reminder !! Next Sunday you may sleep in!
Nobody should be late for the service on December 12th.

We start worship at 1:00 pm

There will be no Sunday School on Dec. 12th.

Workday ~ December 11th ~ 8:00am - Noon

We will be aggressively cleaning out the storage rooms!! Items that are not labeled or claimed will be thrown away or recycled.

Come and help us sort, toss, recycle and clean!

For more info, contact Tim @ 435-6553.

Millbrook Community Thrift Store Hours

December

1st & 3rd Fridays: 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Every Friday: 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

2nd Saturday: 8:00 am - 1:00 pm (Yard Sale)

Last Sunday: 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Exceptions: Friday, Dec. 24th

Senior Pastor - Jerry J. Voss • **Pastor of Discipleship** - Robert Hyatt

Director of Urban Ministries - Alex Castellanos

Office Manager - Judy Edmondson • **Finance Manager** - Carl Campbell

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