

## Israel Hopes

Read Genesis 3:15.

As we move into the storyline of Jesus and His friends, we must establish the aspirations and desires of the Jewish people of the 1st Century. What did people want to witness happening in their lifetime?

It should not surprise us that the Jewish people living in Judea under Greek occupation were very diverse in their desires. Some embraced the changes affecting economics, politics, and religious beliefs. Motivations varied. Others opposed outside Greek influence and interference in their Jewish way of life, some violently.

Some were like the sons of Issachar. They looked at what was happening and understood the implications of current events on the long-term plan of God. God created Israel to be a "light to the nations." While not previously successful as a nation among nations, the "remnant" of Israel knew something was about to change.

### Talking Points

- Idolatry, serving pagan gods, had previously forced God to remove His protection of the Chosen People. Foreign invaders (Assyria, Babylon, Persia) enslaved and exiled them from the Promised Land. Eventually, many returned, just as Jeremiah had prophesied.
- Although they were back in their land, the Jewish people never gave up hope for freedom and self-rule during the Greek occupation.
- Led by Judah Maccabee, Israel united and freed herself from Greek rule. Israel remained an independent nation for about 100 years.
- The *kippa* is a small round cap Jewish men wear during synagogue services. It symbolizes submission to the God of Israel, the hope of the Jewish people.

### Background

As the Silent Years progressed from Malachi to Matthew, some in Israel knew something spectacular was about to happen. Elizabeth, Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, the Bethlehem shepherds, Anna, and Simeon. All of these belonged to a subset of the Jewish people known as the "remnant." The remnant of Israel immediately preceding Jesus' birth knew what their Bible said concerning the arrival of the Son of David. The first prophecy concerning Messiah's birth is in Genesis 3:15.

*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.*

## **Israel's Hope**

It all began in the Garden of Eden. From Genesis through Malachi, prophecy after prophecy added to the resume of the future Son of David. Detail after specific detail led to an angelic pronouncement 4,000 years in the making.

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-11).*

By committing the Scriptures to memory and meditating on them day and night, God revealed the approximate timing of Jesus' miraculous birth to the remnant. While not all of Israel accepted Him, the remnant knew who to look for and how He would arrive and believed in Him when He appeared. The remnant hoped for that which they had not yet seen.

## **The World's Hope Is Israel's Hope**

It has been 2,000 years since Jesus returned to heaven with a promise, "I will return for you." The Old and New Testaments contain prophetic details of Jesus' Second Coming. Like many in Israel during the time of Jesus, many today don't know the Scriptures. They are ignorant about what is happening in the world today.

Take a look around. Rumors of war, runaway inflation, racial tension, global warming. It seems as if everywhere we look, hopelessness abounds. People everywhere are so consumed with "me-ism" that they have never considered that God is executing an overall plan for history that extends beyond their personal cares and concerns. Most have no hope.

There is only one hope. His name is Jesus.

## **Bible Conversations**

- Make a short list of Old Testament prophecies about the birth, life, and death of Jesus. Memorize a few of those verses and consider using them in conversations.
- Israel hoped for Messiah's first appearance. The Church looks forward to His second.
- How does knowledge of prophetic passages equip believers of Jesus to offer hope in these chaotic times?