



REFLECTIONS

December 10, 2017

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David...

Luke 2:4

Looking Down on Bethlehem

A chilling breeze didn't cool the delight of an unscheduled visit to a very special place that day. Neither did commotion from cars whizzing along the nearby highway, nor noise from a large construction site detract from the beauty of Bethlehem beneath us in the distance. We noted a spot believed to mark the stable where Jesus had come into the world. And in the foreground our eyes fell on fields where shepherds tended their flocks; where the glory of the Lord had once shone so brightly, and an angel joined by heavenly host filled the air in song: *"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"* (Luke 2:14 NKJV)

Imagination stirred. Two-thousand years ago, Joseph and Mary may have paused near the place we stood to witness a flickering glow from the candlelit village below. We wondered if the scene reminded them of the prophecy, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me/one who will be ruler over Israel,"* (Micah 5:2)

Their emotional journey had begun months before when Gabriel appeared to young Mary with startling news, *"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"* (Luke 1:28 NKJV) The message presented not only questions of disbelief, but also legal and social issues for the betrothed couple to resolve.

One must wonder if they drew on Abraham's faith when he obeyed God's instruction to, *"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."* (Gen 12:1). We wondered if they found solace in the prophecy, *"the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14); and if Mary found affirmation when her baby leapt in her womb, and Aunt Elizabeth said, *"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."* (Luke 1:45 NKJV)

From where we stood, imagination still stirred. Bethlehem lay only a few miles away, but difficult times wouldn't have been over for Joseph and Mary. Before reaching their stopping place, they still had to make their way down the steep and rugged hillside, travel through the fields where shepherds tended their flocks, and to hear the innkeeper explain there was no fitting place for an expectant mother to give birth.

Those images stirred in our minds as we stood on a hilltop looking down on Bethlehem in the distance. Our imagination naturally drifted to the night Jesus came into the world in a lowly stable. The world was forever changed.

And God has blessed us all.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.