

**ANCIENT WHISPERS PART TWO
BETHLEHEM GRACE
PASTOR ROGER BARRIER
MICAH 5:1-5 2 AND MATTHEW 2:1-6
2-9-07
S-1741**

☉ SLIDE #: ANCIENT WHISPERS

Turn to Micah 5:1-5.

☉ SLIDE #: Mother-in Law

To daughter-in-law: You call this a meal...
Give me a rag; I'll clean this house right.
I don't know what my son ever saw in you!

To son-in law: I always knew you'd turn out to be a loser.
Would you stop watching tv long enough to listen to me.

*The Talking Mother in Law Nutcracker is not really a nut cracker.

☉ SLIDE #: Marie Antoinette

Bobble head on spring: push on her head and it pops off

☉ SLIDE #: Door mat: Nice Underwear

99 cent store: Light up Christmas Madonna

Our gifts to God at Xmas. God probably chuckles.

Insignificant to the one Who holds the stars in his hands.
He loves everyone of them.

"Ancient Whispers." Old Testament Prophecies predicting the advent (coming) of Jesus Christ.

☉ SLIDE #: THE BETHLEHEM PRINCIPLE: STRENGTH FOR THE WEAKEST OF THE WEAK.

☉ SLIDE #: MICAH 5:1: Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod.

Babylonian Hordes sweeping upon Israel in 600 BC.

Israel weak and defenseless. No hope. All is lost.

Success could never depend completely on them. If God did not send a Savior they were really in trouble.

(Jehoikim blinded and taken in chains to Babylon. Jerusalem burnt to the ground.)

☉ SLIDE #: MICAH 5:2: "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, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

● SLIDE #: MICAH 5:3-5: Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. 5 And he will be their peace.

(Double fulfillment)

(Overarching prophecy spanning 600 BC to second coming of Christ.)

● SLIDE #: MATTHEW 2:1-2: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

● SLIDE #: MATTHEW 2:3-5: When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

● SLIDE #: MATTHEW 2:6: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

Of all the places for the Savior to come, why in the world would God pick Bethlehem?

● SLIDE #: God: Why not Alexandria, Egypt etc, All the resources of ancient Egypt to fund His ministry!

Rome was the power city. Kingdom spanned the known world. If you want to get the message, start in Rome and cover the earth.

Jerusalem was the center of Israeli religion and culture and power.

These are the power cities, wealth, resources to fund the ministry.

Anybody who was anybody came from these.

If Christ were to come from Arizona, He would not come from PHX or TUS, PHX looks down on TUS; TUS looks down on Marana; Marana looks down on Oro Valley and Oro Valley looks down on Marana; they both look down on Eloy; and Eloy looks down on Picacho. Jesus would be born in Picacho.

Jesus did not come from the power broker cities of the world.

● SLIDE #: He came to a little, powerless, weak, vulnerable village named Bethlehem.

You don't have to be a powerbroker in life to experience God's grace and power.

● SLIDE #: THE BETHLEHEM PRINCIPLE: STRENGTH FOR THE WEAKEST OF THE WEAK.

The Bethlehem principle is the hope of Christmas:

If the Messiah can come as a little baby from one of the weakest villages on earth, then He can come for me.

● SLIDE #: Thank God, what happened in Bethlehem didn't stay in Bethlehem.

● SLIDE #: THE CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

● SLIDE #: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

If this kind of Grace was sufficient for Paul, then it can be sufficient for us.

● SLIDE #: READ AND EXPOUND 2 CORINTHIANS 11:21-31.

● SLIDE #: READ AND EXPOUND 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10.

Describes vision he had fourteen years ago
Probably a spiritual highlight of Paul's life -- transported to the third heaven.

But, in the time of his greatest exaltation came also his greatest weakness.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12:5-7.

● SLIDE #: The word here for "Thorn" is the same word as "Stake:" No, not the kind of Not steak we eat.
"Stake" like a tent stake you drive in the ground. From Babylonians - sharpen trees and impale people on stake. Paul had stake twisting in his body to keep him humble.

(Boxers: " Torment: "to strike with the fist." ") "Torment" means "to beat, to strike with the fist."

Four Main Guesses as to the nature of Paul's thorn. -

1. Ugly - 2 Corinthians 10:10 - "Letters weighty but bodily appearance is weak. "Beaten with rods."
2. Malaria - very prevalent and incapacitating in Asia Minor.
3. Epilepsy: Read Galatians 4:13-14. Ancient world believed epilepsy caused by demons. Spit to ward off demons. In Galatians 4:14, "reject" = "to spit at" (read with "spit at")
4. Eye trouble - Most probable - blind at conversion, scales -
Galatians 6:11 "Large letters with my own hand"
Galatians 4:15 - "Pluck out eyes"
Acts 23 - trials, chided high priest, slapped "Didn't you know you were speaking to high priest?"
"No didn't perceive that."

● SLIDE #: To one degree or other, we are all like Paul in our weaknesses.

How many of us have stepped on the gas but we have to admit again and again that the power just isn't in us. God didn't equip us with 8 cylinders or with 6 – only four – and those none too good.

Maybe you had expectations of a normal, well-adjusted, happy life, but like a beast from ambush, an accident, or sickness leaped and now you must work with crippled machinery.

Maybe yours is a life that wanted love and missed it.

Maybe yours is a home where marriage might have been a thing of beauty but was a tragedy instead.

Maybe yours is a family where a child created as a blessing became an inward agony.

Maybe yours is a household where death has severed the tie that binds.

● SLIDE #: The “AH-HA!” moment: God promises to us the same Grace for our weaknesses that He poured into Paul during his great weaknesses.

● SLIDE #: GRACE POWER

We usually think of grace in terms of something soft and feminine like a petite young lady, or a graceful ballerina.

Or we think of the Holy Spirit as a dove.

But that is not at all the connotation of the concept of grace.

The working hypothesis behind grace is awesome, unleashed power.

● SLIDE #: A mechanic from a garage in Mangum, Oklahoma, answered the distress call of a woman whose car had stalled. He examined the car and informed her that it was out of gas. The woman asked the mechanic, "Will it hurt if I drive it home with the gas tank empty?"

With Grace, we never drive on an empty tank.

VIDEO TECH: SWITCH TO ROGER'S COMPUTER SCREEN.

Grace = God's Riches At Christ's Expense

Grace is experienced at the moment of our spiritual New Birth when God gives us forgiveness of our sins and peace with God.

(By the way, grace is when Jesus gives us what we don't deserve. Mercy is when Jesus does not give us what we do deserve.)

Grace is experienced as a deep-inner strength and peace that carries us through the most difficult of circumstances.

Grace is strength in times of suffering, help in times of need, comfort in times of hurt, courage in times of fear and sustenance in times of despair.

Paul in Philippian jail: beaten, whipped. Bleeding, chained. Singing songs at midnight. Ask Paul, "is it still worth it?" "Yes, I know that His grace is sufficient."

VIDEO TECH: SWITCH BACK TO OVERHEAD PROJECTOR SCREEN.

● SLIDE #: The potential for experiencing great grace is built through Prayer, Bible Study, and Previous Life Experiences with Christ. In other words, the foundation for experiencing grace comes out of a deep-trusting relationship with Jesus Christ.

VIDEO TECH: SWITCH TO ROGER'S COMPUTER SCREEN.

Spiritual Growth Graph from -10-+10

Experience Grace better at different spiritual levels.

This is one more reason to grow up in Christ.

GRACE IS MORE CAUGHT—EXPERIENCED—THAN TAUGHT. SO, LET'S JUST HAVE A LITTLE TALK.

VIDEO TECH: SWITCH BACK TO OVERHEAD PROJECTOR SCREEN.

● **SLIDE #:** ●GRACE ENABLES TO LIVE ON A HIGHER PLANE.

● **SLIDE #:** Many Americans were moved by the Vietnam-era Pulitzer Prize-winning photo of 9-year-old Phan Thi Kim Phuc (pronounced fuke), naked and horribly burned, running from a napalm attack.

But for John Plummer, pastor of Bethany Methodist church in Purcellville, Virginia, that picture had special significance.

In 1972 he was responsible for setting up the air strike on the village of Trang Bang. He was twice assured there were no civilians in the area.

● **SLIDE #:** In June of 1996 he saw a network news story about Kim Phuc and learned she was not only alive but living in Toronto. Plummer found out she was speaking at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

As Kim addressed the crowd, she said that if she ever met the pilot of the plane she would tell him she forgives him and that they cannot change the past but she hoped they could work together in the future.

Plummer was able to get word to Kim that the man she wanted to meet was there. "She saw my grief, my pain, my sorrow," Plummer wrote in an article in the Virginia Advocate. "She held out her arms to me and embraced me.

All I could say was, 'I'm sorry; I'm so sorry,' over and over again. At the same time she was saying, 'It's all right; it's all right; I forgive; I forgive.'"

Plummer learned that Kim Phuc became a Christian in 1982.

● **SLIDE #:** ●GRACE MAY BE EXPERIENCED AS A SECOND CHANCE.

● **SLIDE #:** ●In 1986 Bob Brenley was playing third base for the San Francisco Giants. In the fourth inning of a game against the Atlanta Braves, Brenley made an error on a routine ground ball. Four batters later he kicked away another grounder. And then while he was scrambling after the ball, he threw wildly past home plate trying to get the runner there. Two errors on the same play. A few minutes later he muffed yet another play to become the first player in the twentieth century to make four errors in one inning.

Now, those of us who have made very public errors in one situation or another can easily imagine how he felt during that long walk off the field at the end of that inning. Brentley's manager must have thought about his removal from the lineup. But instead he chose to forgive him and to give him another chance. It paid off. In the bottom of the fifth, Brenley hit a home run. Then in the seventh, he hit a bases-loaded single, driving in two runs and tying the game. Then in the bottom of the ninth, Brenley came up to bat again, with two outs. He ran the count to three and two and then hit a massive home run into the left field seats to win the game for the Giants.

From the outhouse to the penthouse: Broadcaster; 2000 became manager of Arizona Diamondbacks.

● SLIDE #: ● Derrek lost 45 pounds with a problem in his esophogas. Spasms kept food from going down. Considering putting in a feeding tube.

Vocal Cords injured. Couldn't talk loud or long without his throat spasming closed. For someone who intends to preach this is a career killer.

Led 7 sports camps and could hardly talk. Gave invitations and 115 children prayed to receive Christ.

Only one in 630,000 have this problem.

God led us to surgeon who had pioneered a surgical repair. Only done 112 in his career.

Complete recover.

In Palestine, Texas last Sunday as forty men prayed over Derrek and ordained him to Gospel Ministry.

Brie had a severe reaction that scarred one-third of her lungs. Swollen breathing problems. Pneumonia.

Almost died twice on the way to the hospital after attacks.

Doctors care. Breathing treatments.

Couldn't leave house—fear of germs for three months.

“Are you angry at God?”

“Yes. But if I have to live with this, God will give me grace.

Kept writing for Insight for Living.

On the road to recovery.

Last week was the best week she's ever had.

● SLIDE #: ● GRACE MAY BE THE ONLY THING THAT ENABLES US TO HANDLE THE MOST DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES OF LIFE.

RELOCATION SIGN STORY

● SLIDE #: ● NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE IN OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, WE CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S GRACE.

Even -5s Non-Christians can experience God's grace.

Story told by John Goth, the English Evangelist.

Once saw two boys in hospital -- cots were side by side. One boy had a fever...other boy had been struck by a truck.

The boy with the fever was very weak and the one who had been struck by the truck said to him:

“Say, I was down at the Mission SS and they told me about Jesus and I believe that if you ask Jesus, He will help you. They said that if we believe in Jesus and pray to Him, when we die, He will come and take us to be with Him.”

The little boy with the fever said, “But, what if I am asleep when He comes and I can't ask Him?”

The other boy said, “Just hold up your hand. That is what we did in SS. I guess that Jesus sees it.”

The fevered boy was too weak to lift up his hand so the other fellow leaned over and propped up the pillows and braced it under the fevered boy's arm. And so the little fellow fell asleep with his arm up in the air.

In the morning when the nurse came in, she found the little fellow dead, but with his arm still propped up!

Now, you know that the Lord saw that arm.

“Well,” you say, “that was very simple faith.”

Jesus said, “If you have the faith of the grain of a mustard seed...Except a man become as a little child, he cannot enter into Heaven.”

BOW HEADS: Feel weak today? Like for God to pour in the power? Simple faith? You don't need much—trust God.

● SLIDE #: O little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie,
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light,
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.