



Watchman prayer alert

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed a watchman...
—Isaiah 62:6

First Bradenton

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Could This Really Be Him?

Who I am is not important. Actually, it's my daughter who has the incredible story to tell. She was such a precious child, and I know we're not supposed to have favorites, but she was truly a jewel from heaven. She seemed to enjoy her father's passion for prophecy, and the two of them spent hours studying the ancient texts. She had an aptitude even at the tender age of five that is most uncommon. She could memorize long passages. Many a dinner conversation was monopolized by the two of them discussing the Messiah's rule and role.

Then, on that fateful day, little Mary came to me to tell of an encounter with an angel. She was so excited, but what could I think? Her father put all those ideas in her head. She was a remarkable child, but the chosen one? My daughter? How could that be? We are of humble means? Surely the God of the Universe would not choose a place like Nazareth to visit us. But, I digress.

Mary told me an angel named Gabriel visited her and announced that the "*Holy Spirit would come on her, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her.*" She was told she would conceive and give birth to a son who would save the world. Call me an old cynic if you like, but I felt confident it was all the ideas her father put in her little head. Still, I wondered, "What if...?" Her father simply said, "*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)

Apparently, Gabriel told her that my cousin Elizabeth was also with child. That was almost more difficult to believe. As children Elizabeth and I dreamed of being mothers, but poor Elizabeth was never able to conceive. Now, she is an old woman, well past the appropriate age. I'm a practical woman. There seemed no way to eradicate this notion from my daughter's head, so I sent her to Jerusalem to see Elizabeth for herself. I figured that neither one of them was with child, and perhaps Elizabeth could talk some sense into her.

To my utter shock I discovered I had misjudged. Several months later when Mary came home, there was no denying it anymore. The baby within her was obvious now. There was no way to hide it. Of course, like everyone else in town, I blamed her betrothed. Dear Joseph was beside himself, for he really loved Mary. He'd worked so hard building that little house for them. He told me it wasn't his child. For a while, I feared he would put Mary away or, worse yet, have her stoned.

Years later I learned he was also visited by an angel who told him to take Mary as his wife. How can a practical woman wrap her head around such a supernatural story? I wanted to believe, but I needed to touch it and see it.

I tucked those things away for another day when I had more time for musing. There were preparations to make, for a little one needs many things. As the days went by, Mary and I talked and worked side by side. No longer were we mother and daughter, for now we were sharing as equals, friends. I grew fond of the idea of a grandchild in my home and a new life to snuggle in my arms.

I wept for hours the day Joseph took my little girl (heavy with child) away to Bethlehem. He had to register for the census. They decided it was best to travel together to the city of David. But, her time to deliver was drawing near. Who would help her birth that little one? Was I never to hold the precious Infant? Where would they stay? That was my Grandson!

I've always been a praying woman, but that moment changed my life. As they pulled away and Mary was riding the old donkey, my husband whispered, "*But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.*" (Micah 5:2) Could it be?

For years, I prayed that God would keep them and return them to me. I longed to lay my eyes on that Child. Herod heard tale of a new king born, and he slaughtered all the young children in Bethlehem. That man was obsessed. I feared for Mary, but her father told me plainly, "*A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.*" (Jeremiah 31:15) He assured me that God and Joseph were watching over the Little One and our Mary.

Joseph had fled to Egypt with his small family, and he stayed there till Herod died. Eventually, an angel told Joseph to come back here. Of course, the first thing my dear husband said when he heard the story from Joseph was, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son.*" (Hosea 11:1)

As soon as we heard they would settle in Nazareth, my husband spoke again. "*This is to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'*" (Matthew 2:23)

I finally got to meet my Grandson. He was so full of

life. He was sharp as a whip, too. But, people are cruel, and they whispered behind His back. Joseph was a good father, and he raised the Boy to be strong and work hard and ignore the murmuring of the uninformed. He taught Him to search the scriptures and to think for Himself. He took Him to the synagogue. The Boy and His brothers grew to manhood in the blink of an eye. What a blessing to watch. I touched Him. I saw Him. All along the way, my husband kept quoting:

"For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." (Isaiah 53:2-3)

On occasion, Jesus even expounded on the scriptures in the synagogue. He was a rare and gifted teacher. Just hearing Him, I couldn't help but wonder if He was the Promised One. Then, my husband opened his mouth again:

"He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." (Isaiah 9:1-3)

Our Jesus was a master healer, too. All the tortured souls came to him, the blind, the lame, even the dead. If I had any doubts at that point, they surely evaporated. I think my husband believed as soon as Mary made her announcement years ago, but I had to see it. My man patiently told me one more time, "*Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then, the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy for waters will break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the Arabah.*" (Isaiah 35:5-6)

He also said, "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to*

bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners." (Isaiah 61:1)

How devastating for me and for Mary the night Jesus was arrested by the chief priest and his unruly mob. When I looked to my husband who was unwavering in his faith, he comforted, "*The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*" (Psalm 118:22-23)

"Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9)

The soldiers whipped Him till He was unrecognizable. They mercilessly crushed a crown of thorns into His bleeding brow and mocked my precious Grandson. Oh, how I wept for Him and begged God to spare the One I've grown to cherish. My dear husband held me as I trembled, and he whispered: "*Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.*" (Isaiah 53:4-5)

I wept and he kept soothing, "*But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.*" (Isaiah 53:10-12)

The soldiers paraded Him through the streets and nailed Him to a cross up on the hill for all to see. They threw dice to see who would keep His robe. How humiliating. Mary was right there with Him, but how could I watch such terror. My gentle Grandson was

killed as a violent criminal! His proud grandfather stood in faith and proclaimed again, "*They pierced my hands and my feet. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*" (Psalm 22:16, 18)

As soldiers lifted a wet sponge to His lips, my husband said, "*They gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*" (Psalm 69:21)

My Jesus, my Hope, my Savior, my Grandson was dead. Grief is for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Three days later word arrived from the disciples that Jesus had risen from the grave! He lives! It's true. With my husband, I was shouting, "*He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him.*" (Hosea 6:2)

And again, my dear man reminded me, "*You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*" (Psalm 16:10)

We saw Jesus taken up into heaven with the promise that He would come again. Mesmerized, my husband spoke in reverence: "*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. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*" (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Then it was my turn, "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*" (Genesis 49:10) He is coming again. This is my story, but it's really only the beginning. The mention of Jesus always begs the question, "What will YOU do with Him?" You may stumble over Him, you may reject Him, you may hate Him, you may believe, but you cannot ignore Him. He claimed to be God. (John 14:1-10) If He was a liar, how could He do the things He did? If He was a lunatic, how could He fulfill all the prophecy? If He is Lord, how can you help but believe?

Friends

Government

Work/School

My Needs

Family

Salvation

Miscellaneous