

The Gift of Jesus

Forgetting something like baking soda in your baking is a huge issue. It is a tiny ingredient, but it can make or break your creation. It truly is an important part of the whole recipe.

HOUSE OF BREAD

Christy said, "Big things can come from really little places."

Jesus, the ultimate gift of Christmas, came forth from this little place called Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. When the Christmas story is read each year from the Gospel of Matthew, the wise men remind King Herod that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy that was spoken over half a millennium earlier - Matthew 2:1-6.

The prophecy the wise men reference in verse 6 is from the prophet Micah, that prophecy was given about 700 years before the birth of Christ.

"As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah—from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past."
Micah 5:2

Something big was coming forth out of this little place called Bethlehem. Jesus the Messiah would be born in "House of Bread."

BOAZ, BARLEY, AND JESUS

Even before the prophecy from Micah was foretold, however, something else big happened three centuries earlier in the same city of Bethlehem and bread was at the center of the story.

Here, we find Ruth and Naomi as recorded in the book of Ruth. Distant ancestors of Jesus...part of God's recipe if you will.

Naomi's husband died and her sons died and she is alone with her two daughters-in-law. She tells them they are released from all their familial obligations. She tells them to go back to their own families and find new husbands. The first one leaves, but Ruth stays behind...and together they would do anything to survive.

They find their way to Bethlehem...this is 1000 years before Jesus was born. In those days if you owned a field you had to obey the command recorded in Leviticus 23:22 of not harvesting the corners of your fields. You left these for the poor and the foreigners in your country. One day Ruth was following behind the field workers gathering up what they dropped on the ground and gleaning the corners of the field so she could take it home to make bread.

She is spotted by the owner of the field whose name is Boaz. They saw each other and liked each other. He gave her more food to take home. Ruth told Naomi (her mother-in-law) and she started giving Ruth tips on how to win a man. It worked. They were married.

In the end of Ruth's story, her trip to Bethlehem not only included gifts of bread, but also the gift of a bread winner named Boaz who would provide for her and her family. Chapter 4 concludes the story of Boaz and Ruth by telling of their marriage and later the blessing of becoming parents to a son named Obed. Not only was Ruth finally blessed with a son, but also Naomi was blessed with a grandson she longed to hold. He represented the ongoing of her family name and lineage. Redemption at last!

In Ruth 4:14-17, the women of the village blessed Naomi and rejoice with her in this child and in the security this child would give her. Vs. 17 - *They (the women) named him (the child) Obed. Now he became the father of Jesse – David's father!*

Ruth was King David's great-grandmother which made Naomi his great-great grandmother. And through the ages, the little town of Bethlehem also became known as the city of David. The Angel of the Lord described this in Luke 2:11.

The angel was telling the good news that a Kinsman-Redeemer of all people, had just entered the world and arrived on the scene. Jesus came to the rescue of humanity in the same city where his ancestor Boaz had redeemed his grandmother of many generations ago. The genealogy of Jesus records these ancestors of Jesus from long ago in Matthew 1:5-6 with echoes of what is recorded in the closing verses of Ruth.

Just before the birth narrative of Jesus is told in Matthew's gospel, the writer thought it appropriate to remember the lineage of the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ who came to rescue and redeem the world. It is only fitting that two of his ancestors who met during the barley harvest would be a part in the ongoing gift giving that would lead to the birth of Jesus who would later refer to himself in John 6:35 as "the Bread of Life."

So, in Bethlehem-the House of Bread-this small village in this small area named Judah, a small child, a baby, the Bread of Life was born to change the world for all time. Leave this small ingredient out, and the whole recipe is ruined.

SMALL THINGS CAN BE GAME CHANGERS

The smallest things can change the world. One man giving lunch-leftovers to a girl who was poor...began a marriage that would lead to King David and to Joseph and to Jesus.

What small, insignificant thing at the time happened at Bethel, turned out to be huge? Think about something in your life that seemed like nothing at the time but later made a huge difference.

What moments are you creating this Christmas? Remember, it's the small things that often are the most important.