

Waiting No More, Rebecca's Story

Scene: The Bethlehem Inn where Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus have been staying since shortly after Jesus' birth.

Story. "Papa, they're gone!" Cried little Rebecca as she ran as fast as her 6 year old legs could carry her down the guest hall, down the back stairs, out to the maintenance shed where she knew her father would be working. It seemed her father was always working on something or another keeping their small Inn in repair.

Lucius turned from the grinding wheel where he was sharpening an ax to gather his daughter in his arms. "Who's gone little one?" he said.

"The carpenter! And his wife! And the baby! The baby is gone!" came the anguished reply.

Ever since the young couple had moved into the Inn some months ago Rebecca had been enthralled by the baby boy and the fantastic stories surrounding his birth. She remembered vividly the morning she awoke to hear the servants excitedly whispering of a baby born in one of the stalls cut into the hillside, a series of shallow cave-like rooms where the Bethlehemites kept their animals.

It seems the baby was visited during the night by a gang of shepherds who told a wonderful story of a sky full of angels

announcing the long-promised Savior, the Messiah himself, the Lord, being born that very night in one of the stables! Though the rich and high-born staying in the Inn seemed oblivious to the undercurrents of excited gossip about this amazing event, all the servants and low-caste people seemed to know, and believe. Despite being the daughter of the Innkeeper and of the upper class in Bethlehem, the child Rebecca could go where she wished and usually spent much time with the kindly servant women and their little girls.

After a few days the Inn cleared out as visitors to Bethlehem for the Roman census left for home; and Rebecca saw the couple and their baby (they named him Jesus) move into one of the upstairs guest rooms. Ever since that day little Rebecca had been inexplicably drawn to the child's room; and usually she encountered a quiet, almost reverent crowd of visitors, mostly from the poor class, who usually just stood quietly in the hall looking in at the baby.

It had gone on like this for months until yesterday when the most amazing thing happened! The whole village was thrown into an uproar as a large and very rich caravan entered the town – and they were not just passing through on the way to Egypt! Oh no! They were looking for the baby Jesus! Rebecca watched in awe when the great men from the East, obviously having come a long way, quietly filled the baby Jesus' room and

the hallway outside. Their robes, though dusty, were richer than any rich person Rebecca had ever seen! And their servants, and camels! The caravan took over the whole little town! The servants whispered that the baby Jesus must actually be the King of the Jews as the shepherds had said, because these wise men bowed down to the baby and presented costly gifts! After the Magi left, that's what the head housemistress Dinah said they were called... after the Magi left the village elders were meeting with Father, apparently trying to figure out the meaning of all these strange happenings. And now, this morning, the baby Jesus and his parents were gone! Rebecca was distraught with worry and confusion.

Later that day Dinah found Rebecca in one of her favorite places, in the kitchen next to the bread oven. But this time, instead of happily sniffing the smell of baking bread and warming herself near the fire, Rebecca's face was downcast. When she refused Dinah's offered piece of bread and bowl of goats milk Dinah knew something was really wrong. Taking Rebecca by the hand Dinah led her to sit on the kitchen's back steps. Gathering her into her arms Dinah asked, "Ok little one, tell Dinah what's bothering you."

It seemed a dam inside Rebecca burst and she flooded Dinah's apron with her tears, sobbing and wailing, "the baby Jesus is gone! He's gone!"

At this, Dinah's face, rather than joining Rebecca's sorrow, began to beam with joy, even as tears too streamed down. "Oh little one," she crooned; "hush now and let old Dinah tell you some good news. Hush child, shhhhhh." Eventually Rebecca's sobs became quiet sniffles and Dinah knew she had ears to hear the good news. "Rebecca," she said, "remember how my cousin Simeon, you know, the one who lives in Jerusalem and sometimes visits us on birthdays; remember how he always told us how from the beginning of the world God had promised to send a savior?"

"Yes Ma'am," Rebecca sniffed, "I remember Mr. Simeon telling us about what God said to the serpent, and to the first man Adam: that God would send someone who would kill the serpent."

Dinah continued, "Rebecca, what you don't know is my cousin Simeon is someone who pays attention in Synagogue, and he goes there often to study the Torah for himself. Years ago he told me the Prophet Daniel said the Savior would arrive in Jerusalem 483 years after the Persian King Artaxerxes made his decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Simeon always said he calculated those years would be fulfilled in his lifetime. Then about 5 years ago Simeon started spending all his free time at the Temple. He told me he figured if the Savior is going to be presented to Jerusalem as an adult, then His birth should occur

about 30 years before then – and he was going to be there when the baby was dedicated!

Last Spring, eight days after that amazing night when Jesus was born in the stable, Simeon told me the Spirit of God sent him to the Temple – and there he encountered our own guests, Joseph and Mary, bringing the baby Jesus to be dedicated to the Lord! Rebecca! It's Him! The baby Jesus is the long-promised Savior of the world! He is the Messiah, the chosen One of God! He's the one God was talking about when He pronounced that curse on the serpent in the Garden of Eden and the promise for us sinners. He's the one God was illustrating when He provided a lamb to take the place Isaac on the altar! He's the one born in Bethlehem last Spring and announced by angels! Rebecca, the long wait for the Savior is over! He has come!"

Now Rebecca was grinning, captivated by Dinah's infectious joy. They she sobered and asked, "But where have they gone Dinah? And why did they leave so suddenly, even at night?"

Dinah answered, "Sweetie, Aaron the stable hand told me last night Joseph had him saddle their donkey in the middle of the night, saying an angel told them to immediately flee to Egypt to escape King Herod's searchers. So that's where they've gone. But you know they'll be back in the Lord's own good time; after all, the Baby Jesus is the Savior of the world! We are waiting no longer! Praise the Lord!"

And the little girl Rebecca, along with many others in Palestine at that time, did believe. And because Jesus is the Savior, she, along with the other believers, was saved.