

05.23.2010 (Sun)

Buy the Cave of Machpelah (Gen 23:1-2, 19-20)

Where there is humbling, there is renewal. Man must be humbled to improve. When our thinking level is improved, then the way we live is renewed and improved as well. Water flows downhill and where water is desperately wanted can we see the work of life being manifested. Therefore, we must not disregard low points. When the Lord came to this world, he came through a poor virgin. Mary was in Nazareth when she received word that she would bear the Son of the Most High (Lk 1:26).

But when did Mary come to realization that she was pregnant? In Hebron (Lk 1:39, Jos 20:7)! God had sent his angel Gabriel to deliver the news to the virgin Mary in Nazareth that she would conceive a child through the Holy Spirit. Upon hearing this, she did not listen with thoughts and doubts of man, but rather submitted to and obeyed the Word. Right away, she went to find her relative Elizabeth who was 6 months pregnant with John the Baptist. Mary had stayed with Elizabeth for about three months until John the Baptist was born, and then she returned home (Lk 1:56).

So, Nazareth was where Mary received the revelation that through the Holy Spirit she would conceive a child, Hebron was where she became pregnant with Jesus, and Bethlehem was where she gave birth to Jesus. Jesus grew up in Nazareth until the age of 30 when he began his public ministry, then he fulfilled the work of salvation when he died on the cross. Today's message is to share the grace of God by focusing on Hebron. So, where was Hebron? Hebron was where 12 spies of Israel went to as they explored the Canaanite land (Num 13:22).

Around that area, two of them carried on a pole a branch they had cut off bearing a single cluster of grapes. This showed that this land was exceedingly good (Num 13:23). So who occupied this great land? Caleb, who had overcome the trials of the wilderness came to own this land. After 40 years of wilderness discipline, only Joshua and Caleb had lived without grumbling. In Nu 14:6-15, Hebron was the land promised to Caleb because he fought the Anakite giants without losing faith.

However, the history of Hebron goes back further in time than this. God had promised to give land to Abraham, and the first land God had given to him was a grave. Sarah, who had given birth to Isaac when she was 91 years old, had died at the age of 127. Abraham searched for a burial site and had bought a cave in the field of Machpelah which was at Hebron (Gen 23:1-2, 19-20). So the first land Abraham gained was a grave (Gen 23:4).

*Hebron means "association". The only way to become associated with God is through the cross. The "me", the "I", the "myself" must be done away with to have fellowship with God. The cross is where our ego is buried, and where our faith is armed. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18)!"*

Dear friends, within Hebron is the cave of *Machpelah*. *Machpelah* means "double". Through faith, Elisha had witnessed the work of God and in turn received the double-portion power. His eyes were opened and he saw the chariot of fire and horses of fire as Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Ki 2:9-11). Spiritually speaking, it is at the cave of Machpelah that we put off earthly things and put on the power of the spirit. When we crucify our desires at the cross, we will receive God's doubling power.

The doubling power to distinguish between what is from above and what is from below, as well as what is of the spirit, and what is of the flesh, comes from the cross. Even though we say we have had faith for a long time, we may be unwilling to give time and things for God's work if we do not experience the cross. We may not even be able to willingly give ourselves up. That is why the Lord tells us that anyone who does not take his cross is not worthy of him (Mt 10:38). Cross is lowering oneself and honoring God! Cross is the place where the love of God is manifested!

Beloved friends, faith starts from the grave. With that one grave in Machpelah, it became a mission to conquer the land of Canaan. The right of Israel to enter the land of Canaan since the exodus came from the fact that it was their home. Though Abraham had lived in Canaan as a stranger, it became his home when he had died. 48 years after Sarah had been buried in the cave of Machpelah, Abraham was also buried there, along with Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah (Gen 49:31).

This grave became the doorway to paradise. Sarah's death was not in vain but in the end, became a duty to gain back the Promised land. So realize and don't forget that even a land that was once without God can become promised land by God. God's promise must be fulfilled in us completely! God has promised eternal life for us, so let us act and live by faith until God's eternal life is fulfilled in us (Mt 17:20)!

Dearest friends, where there is humbling, there is healing! Ecc 6:2 teaches us that if we do not enjoy all that God has given us, this a meaningless, grievous evil. By faith we will enjoy all of God's blessings. The place where David was made king was also Hebron (2 Sam 2:11, 5:1-3). By faith we receive the blessing of being humbled. By faith, we too can *buy* the cave of *Machpelah* and stand in the land where the promise of the word dwells!