

Matthew 2:9-18 – God’s Sovereign Hand in the Incarnation 2

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Some years ago I spoke of how the Divine hand of God worked in historical events for Christ to come. For example, there was 1 universal language (Greek), good sea transportation, and an incredible network of roads that helped with the fast spread of the Gospel. The Roman Empire which caused people to spread around the world also allowed different religions to exist and it was a time of great peace. Even the timing of Jesus’ birth was remarkably guided by God’s hand...as the census that forced his mother and father to go to Bethlehem was canceled about 13 years before. Had that taken place earlier, Jesus would not have been born in Bethlehem.

But as we started to see in the first 8 verses of Matthew 2, the Devil was also furiously working to destroy the Line of Promise. In this 2nd sermon you will continue to see the power of God to preserve and protect the Line of Promise from destruction so that God’s goal of bringing salvation to men through Jesus Christ would be accomplished.

Our headings are: **God’s Plan to Protect the Innocent God/Man Child, and God’s Plan to Punish the Children of the Wicked.**

Our goals are: That you will **praise God for his power to preserve the line of promise so you could be brought into the Kingdom of Promise** and that you will be **motivated to work for the Kingdom of Promise with the strength that your God now gives you.**

God’s Plan to Protect the Innocent God/Man Child

9 When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

1. The Wise Men followed the star to precisely the location where the child was. This was by God’s appointment – God’s plan. This was not astrology. And the Wise Men greatly rejoiced when they saw the child. Certainly the Baby Jesus was in a poor place and a poor house...but they went in and worshipped the child. And to show they firmly believed God’s Word to them, they presently **kingly gifts to the poor child:** gold, frankincense and myrrh, **showing kingship.**

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

2. The Devil is strong and powerful, but his power is limited by God, your more powerful heavenly Father. God sovereignly worked in the hearts of men to protect the Promise Seed from being destroyed. (Man plans, but God directs his steps.) Yes, the Devil was cunning and caused the Wise Men to agree to unwittingly participate in his dreadful plan to destroy Jesus. But **God irresistibly spoke to the Wise Men in a dream and caused them to return home without reporting who the God/Man Child-King was and where he was.** The Wise Men’s **allegiance** 忠诚 **was to the King of Heaven.** The vision – a clear word from God – caused these men to **ignore their promise to the king of the land** and the demand of the king that they return to him after they found the child. The Wise Men ran the risk of their lives by refusing to return to Herod, but we can say that they their deliberate disobedience to the king was demanded by their duty to the Deity of heaven. (They, like Peter John, chose to obey God rather than man.)

3. The Wise Men’s action was abnormal. Why? Men would do anything to save face and look good to the outside world – and even more to a king. No one likes others to think ill of him. And neither would the Wise Men have wanted this. But there as a greater good here. Even though their action was called a “mocking of Herod,” their love for God was stronger their fear of death.

4. For these reasons, it seems entirely possible that these wise men truly believed in Jehovah. The fact that they were foreigners was not evidence that they did not believe in Jesus. People from the entire world believed in Jesus. Rahab believed. Jethro believed. Ruth believed. Many Egyptians believed. The city of Nineveh believed. Added to this faithful action, the Wise Men had earlier worshipped the true God. Demons don’t make men worship the true God...demons always tried to destroy the Messiah. And the fact that they were called Magi’s doesn’t mean they were magicians. You worship on Sunday but that doesn’t mean you are sun worshippers. Some worship on Christmas Day but they don’t celebrate the Mass – that perverted Roman Catholic event.

5. But how remarkable that Herod did not think to send spies to see where the Wise Men were going. He was so confident

that the Wise Men would return to him that he got careless. This was another part of **Divine plan protected** by Divine Sovereignty

6. It is remarkable that the Scribes who gave directions to the Wise Men and Herod did not bother to go and see who this king was. Maybe they were too afraid of the tyrant Herod. But that showed their own weak faith. They knew that God keeps his word and they should have been able to calculate with great accuracy from Daniel the exact time when Messiah was going to be born and rejoiced to see him. But God left them in their weak...or non-existent faith. Foreigners went to see the God/Man King and the Jewish leaders ignored. And yet, had they gone to see Jesus, Herod would have known where Jesus was and would have killed him. So God left the Jewish leaders in their own fear and compromise so that the Line of Promise would be preserved. What a **remarkable plan of God**.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

7. God then spoke to Joseph, Jesus' father, in a dream and urged him to go to Egypt in anticipation of Herod's killing of the baby boys. See God's plan. See his knowledge of what would happen in the future. (And the delay, as Herod waited for the Wise Men to return to him, would have given Joseph ample time to head south to Egypt.) You have to realize that this had to be a strong work of God. After all, would a poor carpenter want to think that the powerful king of the land would want to destroy his poor son who seemed to pose no real threat to him? And what sense would it make to flee...not just go...to a place like Egypt...away from one's relatives and friends...and losing all business contacts... And God told Joseph not to go there open ended – but to wait there until the king died. Yet that was strange again. Herod was only 66 years. Who would want to go and live as a foreigner, without all the laws and protection we offer to foreigners today, in a pagan country? But it was one place to which Herod would most likely not search for the child! No one could limit God's Work. He could prepare a feast in the middle of the desert for his people, and does!

8. But being convinced that it was God who was speaking to him, Joseph gathered his things, his wife, and his Son and headed to Egypt. And would not the gold from the Wise Men have come at an appropriate time so that they might cover the cost of their journey to Egypt? What an **amazing plan of God!** A further incentive to move to Egypt might have been **if Joseph thought of his name's sake**, who, forced as a slave into Egypt, later said when he was saving his 11 brothers' lives: You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. The point was: Through this trip to Egypt the Son of God was rescued from the jaws of the serpent-again. And this was the plan of God as well. This was prophecy:

Hosea 11:1 "When Israel was a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

Numbers 24:8 "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce *them* with his arrows.

Hosea's prophecy was a reminder of how God brought Israel from Egypt while he was still in his infancy – a young nation – and established him as his own. And set him in his life. Similarly, Christ's coming out of Egypt was a symbol of new life for the nation. **The body had come out and now the head.** (Calvin) What amazing plan of God, what a beautiful picture to teach of the work of Christ!

God's Plan to Punish the Children of the Wicked

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

1. Herod was deceived by the Wise Men. This was a form of lying –but it was a good lie. It was lie to preserve the innocent Jesus from dying. The Wise Men would not conspire to destroy their Lord. The Wise Men had promised they would come back as Herod asked, but the Wise Men did not return. .

2. So Herod became angry...very angry His anger was so great that he ordered the killing of all boys under 2. He wanted to make sure that he destroyed the Messiah so that his family would maintain power in Israel. Obviously he realized that he was not being obedient to God, otherwise he would not try to destroy the One he knew God was sending.

3. Don't forget the responsibility of the leaders of Israel who instructed Herod about where the Messiah was to be born. They did not do that out of love for the Messiah, but love for their own lives. They did not do that to teach Herod the Jewish faith. They did that to satisfy Herod's evil desire. A man who would kill his own flesh and blood would easily kill the flesh and blood of others, particularly if that flesh and blood was touted as the next king.

4. What is even more stunning of Herod's cruelty was the fact that he had killed, according to Josephus, all the judges of the time, which, according to history took place shortly before the killing of the children. This would nullify any investigation of his crimes... These judges, though improperly killed, were not known for their righteousness, but for their sin. Many of those judges simply did Herod's bidding, caring for their own welfare and not for true justice. And they faced an ignominious death.

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

5. As a result of Herod's killing of the innocent boys, their mothers were heard crying and mourning throughout the land. This was a fulfillment of the promise made before in the Old Testament. Let's read it first.

Jeremiah 31:15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more."

Jeremiah's prophesy was one of God's judgment on Judah and ½ the tribe of Benjamin for wickedness as they were judged by a foreign king of Babylon – Nebuchadnezzar. And so the women of Judah and Benjamin cried that their sons were dying. They cried as Rachel (when she was in Bethlehem) cried when she thought Benjamin would die. Matthew spoke of the same type of crying from women when their sons were being killed by a foreigner.

Genesis 35:16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored *in childbirth*, and she had hard labor. 17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also." 18 And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

Herod was so awful that Caesar Augustus is quoted as saying: "I would rather have been Herod's hog than his son." But this judgment on the wicked was only a down payment on the judgment that was coming...when those same women would not only cry for their children but they would eat their own children for food 70 years later.

6. Soon after the merciless 无情laughter which sealed the wicked in hell, and after the killing of some of his own sons, King Herod was judged by God with diseases and he died when he was about 68...just as God used Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Judah and Benjamin and still held Nebuchadnezzar responsible for the destruction of his people. God's plan!

Conclusion:

God's hand was everywhere in the incarnation. He clearly directed the events of history to provide and protect his Son of Promise. God's love made him move mountains...and moving the hearts of the Wise Men was nothing hard to do. But God also moved his hand against the wicked. Yes, man is prone to think that all children are innocent and none deserves to be punished. He thinks that children in Africa who starve to death are innocent. But he only thinks that way when he looks at the world from his view point. Look at the world from God's perspective and you will see that the children were guilty...and their parents were guilty for rejecting the Word of God...and the Jewish leaders were the guiltiest for corrupting the Word of God. So God judged the sins of the parents on the children. (Remember what God did to the Canaanite children – utter and total destruction?) He is just when he does that. The Jewish parents should have taken this as a warning to return to faithful living before the Lord. They did not. So the utter and complete destruction of the Jewish State came in AD70 when man, women, and children were destroyed in Jerusalem.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: Christ's incarnation was a story of life and death. Mary said that the incarnation was for the rising of the humble and the destruction of the haughty. She sang this under Divine inspiration. Praise God for his guiding hand in ensuring that Messiah would come...and live and die for the sins of his people so the humble would be raised up and the wicked destroyed. What amazing power! Do you live like you grasp the greatness of God's work- the preparation-the completion, for you through Christ? Do you work to tell others these truths so they might be raised up to new life? If you would have helped the poor Baby Jesus in the crib, shouldn't you be helping him now...?

Finally, Christ was stripped of all his heavenly majesty and born in an animal pen and rejected by the poorest people of the land... to show you that his kingdom is an eternal spiritual kingdom. To not be in this kingdom is spiritual and eternal death. So don't spend your life fighting for earthly things. Stop! Look to the king who paid the price so you can enter into his eternal kingdom, knowing that every earthly thing you have will be burned up! Invest in that which will last forever.