

12.29.19 ~ God Provided & Protected His Gift to Us!

The past four Sundays we have studied some of prophecies, events, and people surrounding the Holy Conception of Mary, and the Divine Birth of God in human flesh, Both Lord and Savior, and given the name: Yeshua [Heb.] and Jesus [Gk.] meaning *God's Salvation*; and was called Immanuel [Heb.] (*God with us*).

God's purpose in coming to earth in the flesh of a human child, was that He would ultimately serve as the sovereign payment for all sin, so that we might be made acceptable to God, in and through Jesus Christ.

Today we will look at some of the events and characters that appear in the months following God's advent to earth in the flesh of a male baby, conceived in the womb of a young virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, born in Bethlehem, in Judea.

Read Matthew 2:1-6... Some Magi (learned men who studied the heavens) came from the East (Persia - Iran), in order to find, honor, and worship the newborn King of the Jews. They most likely had servants and a security squad traveling with them, and the Magi would have appeared as royalty and noblemen to the Jews.

The Magi followed a star to Jerusalem (about 1000 miles), and began asking everyone about the birth of the King of the Jews. This greatly troubled Herod (who had been named King of the Jews, by Julius Caesar), so he called for his theologians to find out what the Prophets had written (**Micah 5:2**), "From you [Bethlehem] One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

Read Matthew 2:7-12... Herod, being aware of the Magi, sends for them in order to find out when the "star" (they had been following) appeared; he then sends them to Bethlehem to look for this King of the Jews (who is now a "Child" [or toddler, i.e., 1-2 years old], Jesus is no longer a baby or infant). Herod says he wants to find this child (**verse 8**), so that "[he] too may go and worship Him."

The Magi go to Bethlehem, following the star that came to rest over a house, where the Child, Mary [His mother], and Joseph were now living.

The Magi present magnificent gifts to Jesus:

Gold - One of the most precious metals, associated with royalty and wealth: it speaks of Christ as *King of Kings*.

Frankincense - An expensive and highly aromatic incense made from tree resin, it was used in worship at the Tabernacle, and later, on the incense altar at the Temple, as a fragrant offering to God: *it speaks of Christ as Lord of Lords*.

Myrrh - A valuable aromatic gum resin, it was used mostly for embalming the dead, in order to preserve the dead bodies from putrefaction; it was also mixed in wine to produce sedation or intoxication: *it speaks of Christ as the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God, our Savior.*

The Magi honored Jesus, although just a child, with marvelous gifts, for He is the KING of Kings, LORD of Lords, and the Savior who came to die for our sins, that we might be set free from sin's penalty.

The Magi were warned in a dream (**verse 12**), not to report to Herod, so they obeyed God and returned home a different way.

Read Matthew 2:13-18... Joseph is now warned in a dream to take Jesus and Mary and go to Egypt until Herod is dead, for Herod will soon order the murder of all male babies and toddlers who appear to be around two years of age and younger, in an attempt to destroy the Christ child who had been born (see **Matthew 2:18, cf. Jeremiah 31:15**).

Ramah is about 5 miles north of Jerusalem where Jewish captives during Jeremiah's time were gathered and deported to Babylon, children were separated from their parents, never to be seen again.

Rachel, the wife of Jacob [*Israel*], wept as her children [*the Israelites*] were taken away from their mothers and sent to foreign lands during the time of Jeremiah.

Now, after the birth of the Messiah, God's Son, the mothers in and around Bethlehem would also weep bitterly, for Herod, in a rage of jealous anger, would massacre their male children.

Herod (**Matthew 2:16**) was enraged, physically shaken, so full of anger that he set himself against God, knowing full well the identity of the Child he was trying to kill (**Matthew 2:4**, the Messiah, God's Son), the future Ruler of Israel.

God not only protected His Son by sending Him out of Israel into Egypt before Herod could find Him, but God also provides resources (gold, frankincense, myrrh), so that Joseph and Mary could care for Jesus, while traveling to, living in, and returning to Israel from, Egypt.

Read Matthew 2:19-23... Herod tried to kill God's Son by murdering all the baby boys in or near the vicinity of Bethlehem, but as Josephus (a historian during the time of Christ) records in *Antiquities of the Jews*, that God's judgment came upon Herod, who died a horrible and painful death, after suffering with "ulcerated entrails, maggot-filled organs, convulsions in all parts of his body, and foul breath."

Herod murdered two of his own sons, his wife, and several other relatives; in fact, anyone who became popular among the people was in danger of becoming a victim of Herod's maniacal jealousy.

After Herod died, God told Joseph to return to Israel, fulfilling (**Hosea 11:1**), where God says, "out of Egypt I called My Son."

Herod, at the time of Christ, had three living sons: Archelaus (Ar-khel'-ah-os) ruled Judea & Samaria; Antipas (An-tee'-pas) ruled Galilee (he beheaded John); and Philip II ruled north of Galilee (his wife, Herodias, committed adultery with Antipas).

Herod's son Archelaus hated the Jews about as much, if not more than his father, e.g., one Passover he had 3000 Jews executed.

No wonder Joseph (**verse. 22**) was warned in a dream, not to go to Judea (ruled by Archelaus); but instead to take Mary and Jesus and go to Nazareth in Galilee, ruled by Antipas.

Nazareth was considered a despised place, the term "Nazarene" was often used to express contempt or disdain.

Isaiah 53:3 says, "He was despised and rejected by men... .. and we did not esteem Him."

Four days ago, most of us, if not all of us in this room, celebrated Christmas, in honor of God's Son; but many of the world's inhabitants celebrated Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Winter Solstice, or the Holiday, giving no attention to the Christ of Christmas.

The majority of the world's people are indifferent toward the meaning of Christmas, perhaps ignorant of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus - all of which declare Him to be Almighty God, Lord or all, Savior to those who believe in Him, but Judge and Executioner to those who reject Him.

The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus all declare Him to be the Lord and Savior of all.

John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." **36**, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

God wants us to know and to believe in His Son; God wants everyone to be saved and to spend eternity in heaven.

1Timothy 2:3-4, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

God protected and provided for His own Son when Herod sought to kill Him, and God will provide for and protect all who belong to Him, now and forever.

John 1:12-13, "But as many as received Him [Christ the Lord], to them He [God] gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

If you have not confessed your sins and trusted in Jesus Christ to forgive you, believing in Him as Savior, do it right now; there is simply no good reason not to.

Romans 10:9-10, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

1John 5:11-13, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life [eternal life]; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life [eternal life]. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

At our Christmas Eve Service I shared a piece of literature called, 'Twas the Night Before Jesus Came. The last line of that piece goes like this, "In the words of this poem the meaning is clear; the coming of Jesus is drawing near. There's only one life and when comes the last call, we'll find that the Bible was true after all!"

If you have never confessed to God that you are a sinner, asking God to forgive your sins and save you, please consider Paul's urgent plea in **2Corinthians 5:20**, "[I] beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Don't let another day go by without the assurance of God's eternal protection, provision and presence. The gift of forgiveness and eternal life is absolutely free and God turns no one away.

Acts 4:12, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 10:13, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

In three days this year will be over. Don't attempt to enter the new year without the Eternal Provision & Protection of God that comes through Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior and Lord. Repent of your sins, believe in Jesus for salvation, follow the teachings in the Bible as they have been revealed to us; remain in fellowship and actively participate in a God-believing, God-proclaiming, God-honoring church, and you will have a much more joyous and prosperous year.

Pastor Mike

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