

Intro - The Scene

- ~ Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ, was a small town about six miles south of Jerusalem.
- ~ The Magi – They were from the east (2:1) were likely from Babylon and were culturally influential students of the stars, not evil magicians of some sort. Their interest must have been aroused by the unusual star they observed. We do not know their number, but their entourage was probably substantial to make such a lengthy cross-continent trip and to cause such a noticeable stir in Jerusalem (2:3). Some scholars believe they may have been responding, in an amazing display of faith, to a scrap of Scripture brought to their people centuries before through Balaam (Num. 24:17), who was a Mesopotamian himself. Holman New Testament Commentary – Matthew.
- ~ Herod - Herod was a past master in the art of assassination. He had no sooner come to the throne than he began by annihilating the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews. Later he slaughtered three hundred court officers out of hand. Later he murdered his wife Mariamne, and her mother Alexandra, his eldest son Antipater, and two other sons, Alexander and Aristobulus. And in the hour of his death he arranged for the slaughter of the notable men of Jerusalem. It was not to be expected that Herod would calmly accept the news that a child had been born who was going to be king.

Outline

V1-12 = Herod's Pride

V13-15 = God's Plan

V16-18 = Satan's Persecution

Text

V1-12 = Herod's Pride – someone else was worshipped

- ~ Herod's pride made him paranoid about this newborn king of the Jews the wise men came to see
- ~ Herod's pride made him self-seeking, self-serving and self-preserving
- ~ Pride is the original sin that not only hinders unbelievers but believers alike
- ~ Pride makes us want to seek our own interests (Phil 2:4)
- ~ Pride is worship of self
- ~ Remember when Jesus spoke the Beatitudes he was speaking about the religious leaders who would draw attention to themselves and their worship in their giving, prayer and fasting (Matt 6:1-18)
- ~ While we may not hire a choir to sing our praises we toot our own horn by self-promotion and asserting ourselves over others and especially God's plans and word
- ~ We act in pride when we force our ways, methods, opinions and plans on God and others
- ~ Humility means we don't rise far from the ground in our relationships with other people
- ~ Meekness deals with our relationship with God – Meekness means we can accept God's dealing with us as divine
- ~ Jesus was God's response to our selfish sinful nature

V13-15 = God's Plan – God was ahead of Satan

- ~ V13 – God speaks; V14 – Joseph listens; V15 – Joseph stayed
- ~ That plan is to bring glory to himself and use men and women on the process
- ~ God had a plan to create man (Is 45:18)
- ~ He created the earth to be inhabited by man and put man on this earth with the purpose of sharing his glory with man. God could've kept all his attributes to himself but wanted to share them so he made man
- ~ God created man to have a relationship with and thereby share his glory
- ~ So, in the garden Satan appeared and attempted to and succeeded in ruining that perfect relationship
- ~ Now sin is a barrier between God and man
- ~ Christ was born to be the sin bearer for man's sins and bring man back into a relationship with God
- ~ That's what the word reconciliation means. Man is reconciled back to God
- ~ *2 Cor 5:18-20 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- ~ The OT sacrifices were representative of Christ in his coming but they in and of themselves didn't save the sinner, only Christ's shed blood could do that (Heb 10:1-10)
- ~ So, is it any wonder when we see Herod's pride and paranoia when God tells the wise men not to return to Herod and tells Joseph to go to Egypt until Herod dies?

- ~ God has a plan and it's the cross and reconciliation but Satan wants to destroy that plan
- ~ So God spoke to Joseph to take the child and flee but Satan is always attacking the plan of God

V16-18 = Satan's Persecution – Fulfills prophecy

- ~ Annotated bible - in the following three verses we read of the satanic rage of Herod when he finds that the wise men did not return and all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its borders from two years and under were slain.
- ~ Satan is always attacking the plan, work and word of God
- ~ Herod's pride made him paranoid and insecure
- ~ Now that Herod thinks he's been deceived & tricked by the wise men he decides to take action
- ~ In his pride and paranoia he wants to kill this newborn king
- ~ But behind Herod we must also see that Satan is mobilizing his forces to try to kill Jesus
- ~ We know Herod himself is a mad man but in this case we also have a history of Satan persecuting the people of God and the plan of God
- ~ Satan mobilized and uses people to accomplish his purposes just as God calls people to do his will
- ~ He used the body of what's called a serpent to speak to Eve, (Gen 3), he tried to get Balak to use Balaam to curse Israel (Num22,23), the 3 "enemigos" Sanbalat, Tobiah and Geshem to try to stop the building of the wall (Nehemiah), and Herod here in Matt 2 to try and kill the little boy names Jesus, he'll use the religious leaders to plot to kill Jesus, and he used Judas to betray Jesus for the price of a slave
- ~ V17,18 (Rachel Weeping) *"In the original context, Jeremiah is speaking of an event soon to come as the Babylonian Captivity begins. As the Jewish young men were being taken into captivity, they went by the town of Ramah. Not too far from Ramah is where Rachel was buried and she was the symbol of Jewish motherhood. As the young men were marched toward Babylon, the Jewish mothers of Ramah came out weeping for sons they will never see again. Jeremiah pictured the scene as Rachel weeping for her children. This is the literal meaning of Jer_31:15. The New Testament cannot change or reinterpret what this verse means in that context, nor does it try to do so. In this category [of fulfilled prophecy], there is a New Testament event that has one point of similarity with the Old Testament event. The verse is quoted as an application. The one point of similarity between Ramah and Bethlehem is that once again Jewish mothers are weeping for sons they will never see again and so the Old Testament passage is applied to the New Testament event. Otherwise, everything else is different." [Note: Fruchtenbaum, p. 844.]*

Lessons (A Warning and Two Comforts)

- 1 Man and the devil want worship for themselves (man and devil make everything about them)
 - May we be warned about pride in our life and robbing God of his glory, wisdom and leading
- 2 God is always steps ahead of Satan (God's in his infinite wisdom has a plan that's already calculated into it man and Satan's counter-attacks to God's plan)
 - ~ Holman NT - Consider the arrogance of this man. He was observant enough to recognize the truth of Old Testament prophecies about God's plan, but arrogant enough to think that he could thwart it! No created being, not even Lucifer, can thwart the plan of God. In this situation, God the Father intervened to protect his Son and to preserve our salvation. *Holman New Testament Commentary - Holman New Testament Commentary – Matthew.*
 - ~ God permitted men's efforts to thwart his plan for God's glory and our good
 - Balak – God turned this into a blessing for Israel

Numb 23:9-21 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.
 - Nebuchadnezzar – He was used by God to discipline Judah
 - Persecution in the early church led to the spread of the gospel
 - Paul's thorn in the flesh shows Paul and us the power of God's grace to strengthen us
 - The apostle John is exiled on the island of Patmos and writes the book of Revelation
 - ~ Satan's attacks don't take God by surprise as they do us
- 3 Even the best of Satan's efforts are used by God to fulfill God's purposes
 - It's not as if God is only steps ahead of Satan because God knows the beginning from the end
 - Satan's efforts fulfill OT prophecies (Hosea 11:1; Jer 31:15)
 - When Satan tempts us God can use his temptations for our growth
 - Paul's thorn in the flesh shows Paul and us the power of God's grace to strengthen us