

12202020 Christmas is about God doing what he said he would do... the major theme of the Old Testament— one great truth— "He's coming. That God would one day send the Messiah to the earth to deliver his people. Noah said He's coming....Moses said it, "David said it, ".Isaiah preached it, " Jeremiah promised it, Daniel prophesied it." Micah, Zechariah, Malachi all said, "He's coming." **God wants his people to know his plans because he loves them and so they may learn to live by Faith not sight...and when they witness it take place their Hope is realized realized.....**

*NIV Amos 4:13 He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the Lord God Almighty is his name.*

*NIV Amos 3:7 Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets...*

- **So God want us to know by having his words written down ...so anyone could read it...minus two important omissions...the exact timing and exact circumstances...**
- **It appears that God often if not always does things or allows things to happen in a way, a time and place that doesn't seem to make a lot of sense and sometimes just seems so wrong...**
- **Why? Because you know who else who can read the scripture? the enemy who is committed to thwart the plans of God...but cant for he is missing the key parts of the plan...timing and circumstances**

**As Peter tells us...** *<sup>NIV IPE 1:10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently*

and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. <sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

- Satan and his demons...who were once angels...now fallen... can study intently also...So they knew he was coming! So Gods keeps him off balance
- The word look ...that word is used of the angels looking as scripture...it means to stoop to a thing in order to look into it...to study intently...to inspect curiously...
- So in his brilliant strategy God informs his angels and his people of what he is going to do...giving enough information to trust but conceals His exact strategies until his designated time to reveal them...

All the characters revealed in the Christmas narrative...the birth of the promised Messiah are either heroes...Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, Wise Men, with one Villian King Herod....but you know what heroes are not mentioned hardly at all yet played a key role? ....

\*\*\* The Boys of Bethelam...the slaughter of the toddler boys under the age of two, in Bethlehem and it surrounding area. We will honor them today...in the chirstmas story

But lets start with the part of the story of Christmas that we all like... We love the story of the Maji visiting Jesus

*ESV Matt 2:1* Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

- **Bethlehem was a little town six miles to the south of Jerusalem. It stood more than two thousand five hundred feet in height. Bethlehem was the home and the city of David; and it was for the water of the well of Bethlehem that David longed when he was a hunted fugitive upon the hills**
- **It was in Bethlehem, David's city, that the Jews expected great David's greatest Son to be born; it was there that they expected God's Anointed One to come into the world.**
- **It was in Bethlehem that Jacob had buried Rachel, and had set up a pillar of memory beside her grave . It was there that Ruth had lived when she married Boaz**
- **Maji or wisemen were the counselors and the teachers of the Babylon and later the Persian kings. In Persia no sacrifice could be offered unless one of the Magi was present. They were considered men of holiness and wisdom.**
- **In the book of Daniel chapter two we get insight into what type of people make up the Maji...or King's counselors, those he sought for wisdom and guidance...those who had special talents: Some were Magicians or psychics:those who receives information from spirits**
- **Some Enchanters...talks to the dead...a mediu**
- **Some Sorcerers...those who practices witchcraft, the dark occultic magic arts, who cast spells uses potions...**

- **Astrologers**... those who study the stars astronomers, and seek guidance from them...
- **In those ancient days all pagans believed in astrology. They believed that they could foretell the future from the stars, and they believed that a man's destiny was settled by the star under which he was born.**
- **The belief was that The stars pursue their unvarying courses; they represent the order of the universe. If then there suddenly appeared some brilliant star, if the unvarying order of the heavens was broken by some special phenomenon, the gods were announcing some special thing. It was this very unusual phenomenon that caught their attention....**
- **But to Herod all he heard was a threat to his throne? someone else called the King of the Jews?**

*3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.*

- **When Herod was disturbed or feeling threatened...you bet everyone was disturbed, for it usually meant heads were going to roll! He murdered two of his ten wives...two sons, had all his cabinet killed as his last order before he dies...numerous other people considered threats including the toddlers of Bethlehem**
- **So hearing from the Magi...a new threat Herod summoned the chief priests and the scribes.**
- **The scribes were the experts in scripture and in the law. The chief priests were the priestly nobility, and the members of these select families of ex high priests... And asked them**

**where, according to the scriptures, the Anointed One of God should be born.**

- **They quoted the text in Micah 5:2 to him.**

*Verse 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 “‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”*

- **His plan was for the magi to lead him to the home of this young threat likely not more than a 18 months old.**
- **The magi heard the commands of Herod and were off with great excitement, because they now were less than a day’s journey to their final destiny**

*Verse 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

- **Gold has been long valued due to its beauty and resistance to corrosion It is a metal that does not tarnish. it is the metal of commerce, the appropriate gift for a king**
- **Frankincense and Myrrh** are aromatic resins extracted from rare trees.

- **Frankincense an almost white resin, was one of the most prized and costly substances in the ancient world, worth more than its weight in gold.** It was used in medicines and incense. It represents the intercessor prayer of the Priestly office
- **Myrrh, a dark resin,** was widely used in perfumes, incense and embalming. his death they knew he would die..
- **All of these substances were extremely expensive, usually reserved for royalty when all three were combined the cost was one that only royalty could afford.**
- **the Magi were sent representing a king from another land who could offer up these gifts and honor the new king, a symbol of peace they worshipped him...he was deity to them...**

### **\*\*\*God intervenes on Herod's plan to destroy this king**

*NLT Matt 2:12* When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. <sup>13</sup> After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” <sup>14</sup> That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, <sup>15</sup> and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

- **Often, throughout the centuries before Jesus came, when some peril or persecution made life intolerable for the Jews, they sought refuge in Egypt.**
- **The result was that every city in Egypt had its colony of Jews; and in the city of Alexandria there were actually more than a**

million Jews, and certain districts of the city were entirely handed over to them.

- Joseph in his hour of peril was doing what many a Jew had done before; and they would not find themselves amidst total foreign strangers, for in every town and city they would find Jews who had sought refuge there.

The quotation from Hosea 11:1, which reads:

*ESV Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. **First the Israelites then the Messiah***

**\*\*\*The costly part of the Christmas story... Jesus was safe but what about those the other little boys of Bethlehem...often considered the first martyrs... and their families? could not the angel warn them also?....yes.. but he did not... Evil visited Bethlehem within a short time. 30-60 toddlers and infants lost their lives that horrible dyday...Nothing would ever be the same for their families.**

*NLT Matt 2:<sup>16</sup> Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. <sup>17</sup> Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: <sup>18</sup> "A cry was heard in Ramah—weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead."*

- **The picture in Jeremiah 31:15 was this. Ramah or Bethlehem was where Jacob had buried Rachel, and had set up a pillar of memory beside her grave Their tears were those of mothers who would not be comforted.**

- **Jeremiah was picturing the people of Jerusalem being led away in exile during the Babylonian captivity as they would pass through Ramah or Bethlehem ...right by where Rachel lay buried (1 Samuel 10:2); and Rachel weeping, even in the tomb, for the fate that had befallen her people.**
- **and now hundreds of years later weeping again mourning the murder of toddler boys of Bethlehem...**
- *On one level we know that Mary and Joseph were warned so that Jesus might be preserved from Herod's murderous intentions.*
- **But what shall we say about the other boys of Bethlehem? And what about their parents? Were not those babies precious to the Lord also? Yes the Lord does care and that he does hear the cries of those who hurt so deeply.**

*Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed."*

- **I understand that this truth would have been small comfort to the weeping mothers of Bethlehem.**
- **On that night it seemed like a senseless slaughter, and the next night it seemed the same. One week later, One year later it still made no sense. Even decades later no one family could understand why their babies had to die.**
- **And it is also true that Millions of people can testify to God's presence in the midst of the worst pain and the greatest losses.**

**This much we know for certain. \*\*\*\*These toddler boys died, causing Herod to cease chasing the Messiah...believing he had rid the threat to his throne....and it threw off the Enemy Satan! the loss of those boys preserved his Son.**



- **For If he had died in Bethlehem, he couldn't have died at Calvary.**
- **\*\*\*Seen in broadest perspective, Jesus escaped the first time so that he wouldn't escape the second time so that we would escape for all time.**
- **When we get to heaven and speak to the boys of Bethlehem!! *They and their parents will surely say ...it was good we gave our lives and fooled Herod and his puppet master Satan....so Jesus would live...so he could die later and save mankind! Our death's helped save the world...excellent short term trade off...for eternal life!***

**In that confidence let us trust in God and commit ourselves to Jesus in all things...in our victories our defeats our weeping and our rejoicing... Our King who was and Is and will come again...**

End