

Even though most of the Jews looked for a messiah, they were generally ignorant of the Old Testament prophecies that identified the true Messiah as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The majority expected the messiah to be a conquering military-like leader who would defeat their enemies, set up his kingdom in Israel, and rule the world through them. They did not expect the true Messiah as described by the prophet Isaiah - "*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Isa. 53:3). Satan sought from the beginning to kill Jesus. He feared the One who was sent to crush his head (Gen. 3:15), and, as God manifest in the flesh, accomplish salvation for His people by establishing a righteousness which God has imputed to them for justification and life. Jesus' life on earth was for the purpose of fulfilling all righteousness for His people to insure their complete salvation by God's grace and power and destroy Satan's work (Heb. 2:14-17). The gates of hell could not prevail against Him! The story of the Lord Jesus Christ is the story of the suffering Servant of God Who by His suffering unto death (His shed blood) conquered sin, Satan, the world, the flesh, and death for all whom the Father had given Him in the everlasting covenant of grace before the world began.

(Matt. 2:13-15) - When the wise men departed, "*the Angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream.*" This is one of many times in this narrative so far where the Lord spoke to someone in a dream (cf. Matt. 1:20; 2:12,13,19,22). The Lord God frequently revealed truth to men in times past through visions, dreams, angelic visits, all until the inspired written Word, which speaks of the Incarnate Word (John 1:14; Heb. 1:1-3), was completed. All that God has to say to us today can be found in the inspired written Word (2 Tim. 3:14-17), and this must be revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12-14). In the Bible, we have the totality of God's revealed word. Those who claim to have revelations from God that are extra-biblical (outside of or contrary to the written Word) are false witnesses and cannot be trusted. Whatever truth God reveals to His people will align with what has already been written in His Word. Our only hope of salvation is, by God's power and grace, is to hear God's Word as the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work as He is identified and distinguished in the Holy Scriptures (Luke 16:29; 24:26-27,44-48; John 5:39-45; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Notice the Angel of the Lord referred to Jesus and Mary as "*the young child and his mother.*" The Lord Jesus Christ was, is, and forever shall be the Son of God, having no beginning and no end, as well as the virgin-born Son of Man. The time of His birth, every event during His life, death, resurrection, and ascension was all ordained by God. Not one second could be altered by Satan or evil men. Jesus Christ would not die until the time appointed by God before the foundation of the world (Luke 22:22; John 7:30; 8:20; Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28). God in the sovereignty of His providence directed the path of the Lord Jesus, as well as the path of His mother and Joseph. Joseph took Mary and Jesus and "*departed into Egypt*" and remained there "*until the death of Herod.*" This was as it had been determined by God and foretold by the prophet Hosea (Hos. 11:1). The fulfillment of all the prophecies to which Matthew refers proved that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the one and only Messiah.

(Matt. 2:16) - The wise men had been warned not to return to Herod. This infuriated Herod to the point that in his efforts to kill the new-born King, he ordered that all male children two years old and under that lived in and around Bethlehem be killed. Herod was inspired by Satan and his own evil desires. What a horrible and barbaric command, but this shows how much the natural man hates the things of God. Many of us fool ourselves into thinking that we are incapable going to such lengths in sin, but the Bible tells us that we are all capable of such

things and would commit such evil were it not for the restraining hand of Almighty God. This is why we are all equally in need of salvation by the sovereign will and grace of God based on the righteousness of God fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ!

(Matt. 2:17-18) - This evil act of an evil man was also the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:15). In Scripture, Bethlehem is first mentioned in connection with the death of Rachel (Gen. 35:16-20). Rachel died giving birth to a son, whom she called Ben-Oni, meaning "son of my sorrow." Jacob changed the boy's name to Benjamin, "son of my right hand." Both names prophetically point to Jesus Christ Who was "*a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief*" (Isa. 53:3), and Who is now exalted to God's right hand as "*a Prince and a Savior*" (Acts 5:31; Heb. 1:3). In Jeremiah's prophecy, the Lord promised Israel hope for their future (Jer. 31:17). That promise was fulfilled temporally in the nation's return from Babylon, but ultimately and eternally fulfilled for SPIRITUAL Israel in Jesus Christ. Jacob and Jeremiah associated Bethlehem with death and mourning, but Messiah's birth transformed it into a symbol of hope and life. Ramah was a town near Bethlehem (Joshua 18:25). Rachel's grave was between Bethlehem and Ramah (Gen. 35:19). So, Rachel represents all the sorrowful mothers of that area whose hearts were broken due to the murder of their children. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew strategically included statements such as "*a voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation*" to show that the details of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection were all in harmony with the Old Testament. God made His Son's identity clear. Israel's Savior was destined to identify with His people's historical suffering and exile as well as their exodus from slavery "*out of Egypt.*" Jesus is inseparably tied with the history of His people, not only with the Jews, but all believers, God's elect (Jew and Gentile) whose spiritual history and life before salvation involve mourning, exile, and slavery to sin.

(Matt. 2:19-21) - Again, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him, that because Herod was now dead, to leave Egypt and take Jesus and Mary back to Israel. As he had done throughout this narrative, Joseph obeyed the Lord.

(Matt. 2:22-23) - Herod died, and his son, Archelaus, ruled in Judea. Archelaus was as evil as his father. The Lord appeared to Joseph and told him not to go back to Judea. He told Joseph to go back to Galilee and the city of Nazareth (Luke 2:4). Galilee was made up of people who were generally despised by the Judeans because in Galilee the blood of Jews and Gentiles were mixed through marriages (cf. John 1:46). It was generally acknowledged that people who lived in Nazareth were the poor who could not afford to live anywhere else (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). "*He shall be called a Nazarene*" - Nazarene was a term of reproach and carried with it the allusion of those prophecies that Messiah would be despised, rejected, and hated (Psa. 69:4; Isa. 53:3; Acts 24:5). Some say that "*Nazarene*" is associated with a Hebrew word, "netser," which signifies a branch or a sprout (cf. Isa. 11:1). All of this fits perfectly with the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is hated by the world because His very presence and work will not allow for any other way of salvation but by God's grace based on HIS shed blood, His righteousness imputed alone (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). His death and resurrection are a testimony that all who are ignorant of and not submitted to Him and His righteousness as the only way of salvation are condemned under God's just wrath (John 3:19-20; Rom. 10:1-4), that all of their efforts to save themselves and make themselves righteous are evil in God's sight (Luke 16:15; John 3:19-20), and that if they do not turn to Him in God-given faith, rest in His finished work for salvation, and repent of their dead works, they will die in their sins (John 8:24). This is the Gospel message of salvation for sinners (Rom. 1:16-17).