

Matthew 2: v. 13-23 – The Bad News about Christmas.**(Satan is cursed but not yet destroyed)**

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." 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. 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." ¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Introduction.

So far in Matthews's Gospel we have covered most of the facts about the Christmas story.

We have learnt the two most important things about Christmas.

The first was that God became a human being, perfectly human, but perfectly "Divine".

The seed was planted in the womb of a woman called Mary. She was chosen by God for this special task.

The second thing that we learnt was the purpose of God becoming a man. The purpose was to be the Savior of the world. The name Jesus means Savior.

We also discovered the reason why mankind needs a savior.

This is very important, because most people don't recognize that they need a savior.

About 7,000 years ago after God had created this world in 6 literal days, He created a man in His own image. He gave the man complete freedom, with one rule. That rule was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If man disobeyed God's one rule there would be consequences. He would suffer physical and spiritual death.

God also created a woman from the man to be a helper and friend for him.

Sadly a fallen Angel called Lucifer (described in Isaiah Chapter 14: v. 12-15 and in Ezekiel 28: v. 11-15.) tempted Eve to doubt God's love for them and persuaded Eve to disobey God and eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Eve in turn persuaded Adam and he ate the fruit too.

The result of this was that Lucifer was cursed by God and Adam and Eve received the punishment of death that God had promised to Adam if he eat fruit from the forbidden tree.

We are told in Romans 5: v. 12 that as a result of Adam's disobedience sin entered the world and spread to all people. This means that everybody is born into this world with a sinful nature. That includes all of us too here today.

God is 100% Holy and He can't stand sin, therefore He must punish mankind for their sin.

However although God is a God of justice, He is also a God of Love, and in His love and mercy He provided a rescue plan to redeem sinful mankind. That rescue plan came in the form of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus came into this world specifically as God's rescue plan for sinful mankind.

He grew up from a baby and became a man and then willingly died a cruel death to take our punishment for sin.

John 3: v. 16

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So if you want to be rescued from God's punishment from your sin this Christmas, you need to believe, not in what Lucifer or Satan says to your heart, but what God's love has demonstrated through His Son Jesus Christ.

We may NOT feel that we are very sinful this Christmas but I can guarantee that if you ever came face to face with a Holy God you would react like Isaiah.

Isaiah 6: v. 1-5.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!" ⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ So I said: "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

So Christmas is all about celebrating the birth of Jesus, our savior, coming into this world as God's only rescue plan.

Matthew's gospel takes us a little further in the narrative about the Christmas story and gives the complete story.

I am calling this sermon the bad news about Christmas. Is there any bad news about Christmas?

Sadly there is bad news every Christmas. The bad news is that satan is still alive and well and will always oppose God's plans.

However as the narrative today is difficult to receive at this festive time and the fact that an Angel is featured twice in our passage, I will be spending some time telling you the TRUTH about Angels. It is a doctrine worth knowing about.

So let us now go into the text and in it we discover three things.

1. The Protection of Jesus – v. 13-15.
2. The Murder of babies under 2 years old. – v. 16-18.
3. The return of Jesus to Israel v. 19-23.

1. The Protection of Jesus – v. 13-15.

When the Magi that I spoke about last week left the house where Jesus, Joseph and Mary were living, 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.”

Joseph immediately responded to the word of the Angel and left with Mary and Jesus and headed out by night, towards Egypt, so that nobody would see them.

It was a long journey and they needed to get going.

The distance for Mary and Joseph was about 426 K.M. which is about 264 miles which is the exact distance from Kobe – Tokyo.

Remember there was no Shinkansen, it was a horse, camel or donkey. I expect that they took two donkeys.

This incident didn't take God by surprise, He knew that it was going to happen.

We are told by the prophet Hosea in Hosea Chapter 11v. 1 “out of Egypt I called my Son.....”

Matthew being a Jew was well aware of Old Testament prophecy and was able to link all the three events of this passage into Old Testament prophecy.

Joseph and Mary would have been quite unaware of the danger that Jesus was in.

If it wasn't for the Angel of the Lord then they wouldn't have known their danger.

This offers us a very positive encouragement about the ministry of Angels.

I want to pause here for a moment to give you some Biblical facts about Angels before we move on to the bad news.

In the early 90's there was an explosion of interest in Angels and a book written by Sophy Burnham sold more than 500,000 copies. The problem with her book was that although it contained personal experiences from people, it was not Biblical and undoubtedly many of those people experienced not visitations from Angels but visitations from fallen Angels, messengers of satan.

Remember that satan can transform himself as an Angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)

Therefore the Bible is the only guide we can use when desiring to know the "Truth" about Angels.

1. Jesus believed in the existence of Angels – Matt.18:10
2. Paul and other writers in the N/T believed in Angels. – 2 Thess. 1:v. 7, Col. 2:18, Eph. 1:21, 1 Peter3:22, Jude 9.
3. Angels are created beings – Col. 1: v. 16, Neh. 9: v. 6.
4. Angels have tremendous power – Psalm 103: v. 20. Remember they destroyed 2 cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19)
5. Angels cannot be counted as there are so many. (Heb. 12:22)
6. Originally all Angels were created "Good". However some of them sinned, including Lucifer. 2 Peter 2: v. 4 and Jude 6.
7. Satan has his own band of Angels as described in

Matthew 25: v. 41

The Bible tells us that these fallen Angels, Oppose God's purposes. (Dan 10: v. 10-14)

Afflict God's people.(Luke 13: v. 16, Matthew 17: v. 15-18)

Execute satan's purposes. (Matthew 25: v. 41, 12:26-27,)

Hinder the spiritual life of God's people. (Eph. 6:v. 12.)

Try to deceive God's people. (1 Samuel 28: v. 7-20)

So what about the work of God's Angels?

These Angels have a Heavenly ministry (Is. 6, Rev.5:11,)

But they also have an earthly ministry.

In the main Angels do service for God's people here on his earth.

They do three main things;

1. They guide the believer. Acts 8: v. 26.
2. They encourage and strengthen God's people - 1 Kings 19: v. 5-8. Matthew 4: v. 11. Luke 22: v. 43.
3. They defend, protect and deliver God's people. Dan. 6: v. 22, Acts 5: v. 19. 12: v. 8-11.

They are also eye witnesses of the Church and the believer. See 1 Tim. 5: v. 21, 1 Cor. 4: v. 9 and 1 Cor. 11: v. 10.

Q. Are Angels of God still operating today? Yes.

In the History of Christianity God has often responded with the ministry of Angels when individuals and nations cry to Him in prayer.

During the Second World War the King of England called the whole nation to prayer.

The Churches were full of people praying to God for Help.

It seemed that Hitler was going to win the war.

However God responded in answers to those prayers. It has been said that the Battle of Britain involving British aircraft was the biggest significant factor that won the Second World War.

Here is a true story from the battle.

I quote from a story which is in the book "The Truth about Angels" by Terry Law.

" On Sunday morning in September 1940, Prime minister Winston Churchill and some military advisers were in an underground operations room in Southern England watching the lights on the electrical battle charts.

There was a dangerous shortage of materials, and intelligence reports showed that German forces were preparing to invade England.

On that otherwise quiet Sunday morning, a sudden alert heralded the approach of Nazi aircraft from several directions.

There were 40 from one direction and 60 from another direction, followed by a formation of 80 planes. This was only the beginning. Aircraft continued to fill the sky from every direction.

There were only 25 squadrons defending Southern England at the time.

It seemed that we would lose all of our planes and be defeated.

Suddenly the German planes started to retreat with 185 of their planes shot down.

Against all logistical probability the British Airforce won the battle.

There was no natural explanation for the British victory.

Imprisoned German aircraft fighters said this afterwards.

" Where did you get all those planes from, you outnumbered us ?"

Lord Dowding told a true story of dead pilots whose planes kept flying and pilots inside aircraft who were not registered British pilots, they must have been Angels.

At 9p.m. every night the nation of Britain was told to pray during the war.

Afterwards a senior German officer said, " With the striking of your Big Ben clock each night you used a secret weapon which we did not understand. It was very powerful and we could find no countermeasure against it."

We know that the secret weapon was prayer.

What a wonderful thing to know this Christmas, that just as God used Angels in the Christmas story to fulfill His purposes, so He can use them to fulfill the purposes He has for us if it is His will to do so.

So now we come to the bad news about the Christmas story.

2. Herod ordered that every child under 2 years old should be murdered. V. 16-18.

We are not sure how many babies were murdered but for the Mothers concerned it must have been horrific. The incident was so bad that the women couldn't be comforted.

It is very difficult to understand why God would have allowed this incident to happen but I feel that Matthew Henry in his commentary makes a point that is worthy of note.

Quote from Matthew Henry's Commentary.

"We are not to suppose that these children were sinners above all that were in Israel, because they suffered such things. But we must look upon this murder of the infants under another character; it was their martyrdom. They shed their blood for Him, who afterwards shed His for them. These were the infantry of the noble army of martyrs."

We live in a sin sick world that is full of evil people. Sometimes we think that the devil gets his own way. However God is still in charge and he will always be sovereign in His purposes for people.

Compared with eternity our lives are short at best. However the death of Jesus offers eternal life.

When we get to heaven we are going to meet some people who were killed as Martyrs for the cause of Jesus Christ. We may be surprised who will be there.

Many years ago Missionaries arrived in Korea. They held Bibles in their hands to bring the gospel to Korea. They were killed on the beach before they had a chance to bring the gospel to Korea.

That was very sad, and it seemed that these missionaries' lives were cut short with no fruit for their labour.

However years later on the very spot that they were killed a "Revival" broke out in Korea that has in some way continued until today.

God will honour the blood of His Martyrs for His glory.

It is a sad story about the children who were killed, but through the ministry of the Angel, Jesus was saved in order to eventually die for the sins of the whole world.

Praise God for this.

3. The return of Jesus to Israel v. 19-23.

The last section is good news again. The evil Herod eventually died and an Angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to return to Israel with Jesus.

Joseph was guided by God in a dream to go and settle in the region of Galilee and the city of Nazareth was chosen. This was also a fulfillment of prophecy.

We have to go back to Judges 13: v. 5 to connect with this prophecy. In the context of Judges 13:v. 5 it was about Samson, however Matthew connects this also with Jesus.

So Jesus returned to the hills of Nazareth where he grew up.

If you go to Nazareth today you can visit the reconstruction of a small village which is like the village that Jesus grew up in. There are amateur actors that roam around the village. You get an idea of what it was like for Jesus growing up in Nazareth.

God is the author of the Christmas Story from beginning to end.

However Christmas is only Good News for those people who know and love Jesus as their own personal savior. Their JOY is for eternity. It is not limited to this world which is so full of sin and evil.

Yes there is Good News and Bad News about Christmas.

The Good News is that Jesus came to rescue us from the consequences of our sin, eternal punishment by God. If we refuse that offer we face the consequences which will be eternal punishment in hell with the devil and all his angels.

Today might be the day that you cry to God to rescue you, don't delay this might be your last Christmas.

Let us pray.