

CHRIST "FULFILLED"

The Gospel accounts of Luke and Matthew provide a fascinating glimpse of the early days of Jesus Christ beyond His birth, as God fulfills numerous Old Testament prophecies, in His protection and provision. The Lord Jesus Christ is the promised Servant-King who fulfill's the Father's purpose. Previously we looked at prophecies foretold, precious offerings given, and Christ fleeing to Egypt, but here's the rest of the story.

Herod and all those who tried to destroy the Christ and His people are in the end unable to thwart the plans of the Father for His Son. RC Sproul says, "we too can be sure that even when the church suffers persecution at home and abroad, God's kingdom will never be overcome. Pray for believers to remember the Lord's victory, and stand firm for the gospel."

1- FURIOUS - the response of king Herod. Matthew 2:16-18 records "*Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wisemen, became furious, and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time ascertained from the wisemen.*" This is a terrible parallel to the Savior's birth. Then was fulfilled, "*a voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*"

This was spoken in Jeremiah 31:15 of children of exile. Rachel was the wife of the patriarch Jacob who bore the patriarch Joseph. Her tomb is at Bethlehem (Genesis 35) and she is regarded as the matriarch of the nation of Israel. By Jesus' day, the phrase "*Rachel weeping for her children*" was applied to mistreatment of the Jews. But Jesus is the Promised offspring who came to be the Deliverer.

2- FREEDOM - God's over-arching purpose. We too would be right to lament the loss of more than 60 million children to abortion, and the travesty of tax dollars paying for it, as one of the great issues of religious freedom today. Remember, fundamental human rights come from God, not any government. Remember: "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech.*" Believers must be diligent to know and to preserve our God-given rights, and not succumb to the lies of the world, the flesh, the devil, especially as it comes to the rudimentary rights of human life. God's written Word provides us the principles to live by.

Ruthless Herod cuts a wide swath as he attempts to eliminate a potential rival, this newly born 'king of the Jews.' All this shows the dramatic reality of redemption, as the story of an innocent infant in a cradle begins to clarify His destiny of death. Behind Herod is the wrath of Satan, intent on the destruction of the Deliverer who had come to destroy the devil and all his works and ways of death (1 Corinthians 15:24-26, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8). So God superintended the Israelite lineage of Christ, for thousands of years, including through slavery and exile. Nothing could frustrate God's ordained plan. As 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, all God's promises find their yes and amen, their fulfillment, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3- UNFOLDING - as God fulfills His plans. Matthew 2:19-23 records that after Herod's death, God told Joseph to go back to Israel. Herod died in 4BC and the Christ he tried to eradicate still lives and reigns today. Even the world's calendar turns on the Lord Jesus Christ: BC means "before Christ" and AD means "anno domini" the Latin for "in the year of our Lord." He is the great hero of history.

Joseph avoided Judea (Bethlehem and Jerusalem) because Herod's evil son reigned there, and so Jesus' family returned to Galilee, to Nazareth, to fulfill the prophets that Jesus the Christ would be called a Nazarene. The word's Nazareth and Nazarene in Hebrew play on the prophesied "branch" of Isaiah 11.

RC Sproul observes, "understanding how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament means we have to look at more than just isolated verses and proof-texts. Jesus fulfills the broad theme, ideas, and stories found through-out the Old Testament. We must be well-versed in the Bible."

At this point in the gospel narrative, Matthew 2:19-23 lines up with Luke 2:39-40: "*they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon Him.*" You can be glad that Matthew and Luke don't agree word for word, as scholars would say this could indicate textual fraud. The reality is that two human authors chose different perspectives and events to emphasize, and this adds to the veracity of the New Testament narrative.

4- FULFILLED - as God feeds your soul. You can rejoice in the integrity of Scripture. God preserved exactly what He wants us to know, even as he preserved His Messiah through thousands of years of twisted lineage and trials and tribulations. It's all recorded in the Bible, to fulfill His plans - and to encourage us to persevere in our tribulations too. God keeps His promises!

Next, we'll explore how Scripture was the spiritual food that nourished the young Lord Jesus Christ to grow pleasing in God's sight. It would have been the daily priority in a devout home like Joseph's and Mary's. Is it your priority? God revealed and preserved the Lord Jesus Christ, as His one-and-only Son of God come in the flesh, to redeem and transform us. Scripture informs us and nourishes our souls.

So we too ought to grow in the Lord, becoming strong in His Word and His ways, by His power within. We too are to be filled with His wisdom, with the favor and grace of God upon us. You can read the entire Bible through in one year in about 15 minutes per day. Dig deeply into Scripture this year, every day! ☐