

Bethlehem to Bedlam

Matthew 2:13-23 B

About 750 years ago in S/E London, England in 1247 to be exact, an enterprising group of Christians founded a hospital they named **St Mary of Bethlehem**. It impacted the community immensely. But as the years wore on things changed at **St Mary of Bethlehem**, the staff, ownership the hospital itself. Two centuries after being built it was converted into a hospital for the *criminally insane*. In those days feeble-minded, violent, out of control inmates at asylums were chained, tied up or put in straight jackets and often abused. This once great healing institution had now become known for the shrieks, wailing's and forlorn howls coming from it's corridors. It's reputation turned to one of chaos and confusion as the cries of the damned echoed from the dorms of the demented. Gradually the original name **Bethlehem** was shortened to **Bedlam**, a word coined in our English language describing a place of wild uproar, commotion and chaos.

No sooner hailed by shepherds gifted by the wise men did bedlam come to Bethlehem. Get out the angel said Herod's hatred will soon bring horror to this city.

No Longer could they sing '*O Little Town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie*'- but now '*O Little town of bedlam, thy shrieks do reach the sky*'

Matt 2:13-23 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."
 14 And he arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt;
 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son."

Dream directed Magi, an angel appeared to Joseph giving guidance '*flee to Egypt*'. Supernatural leadings.....granted to those willing to do God's will.

To Egypt's border 75 mi + 100 mi to town of safety. Question arises if so poor how could they fund the journey? Used gifts as travel and living expenses '*give us our daily bread*'.

Hosea 11:1 double meaning Jews and Jesus out of Egypt.

Egypt had reputation as a land of witchcraft and black magic The Talmud '*ten measures of sorcery descended into the world! Egypt received nine the rest of the world one*'.

Jesus' enemies said He learned His occult powers in Egypt giving Him the ability to do miracles and deceive others. *You cast out demons by power of Belzebub*

Celsus 3rd century philosopher "*Illegitimate son hired out in Egypt learned miraculous powers returned to His country used powers to proclaim Himself God.*"

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus '*Jesus had magic formulas tattooed on His body so He'd not forget them.*'

Little knowledge is dangerous when build whole system of unbelief out of a skeptic's stupidity. He was only a baby! Couldn't walk or talk.

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With **blessings** come **trials**. Mary w/ child-stigma illegitimate. Shepherds/Magi-Herod. Jesus as a babe began w/ trials--If all the promises be true about this child why such difficulty from the start. Jesus *'man of sorrows, acquainted w/ grief*. Jeremiah ordained to trouble

Jer 15:10 Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me As a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land! I have neither lent, nor have men lent money to me, Yet everyone curses me. Jer 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the magi.

17 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more."

Herod a butcher--no sooner on throne than snuffs out Sanhedrin, religious supreme court of Jews, butchered 300 court officials, wife, mother in law, sons, arrested honorable

Paranoia went into overdrive when he heard news of a new king in town. Calculated age of the baby, Jesus couldn't be more than 1 yr yet kills 2yr olds and under just to make sure, 20 – 30 from size of Bethlehem plus surrounding districts.

Gen. 35:16,19. Rachel wanted children. Birth of Joseph and died in travail over Benoni-- **the son of her sorrow**. These mothers were like Rachel, lived near Rachel's grave, and many of them descended from Rachel--their sorrowing is representative of Rachel's weeping.

Jeremiah pictured captives of Jerusalem led away into exile *Jer 31:15 Thus says the LORD, "A voice is heard in Ramah* (deportation headquarters for captives-place Rachel buried), *lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*" Portrays Rachel weeping from her tomb over captivity.

Killing children two and under, he's about 70 - no way would he see a baby become king or threaten his throne. *Ps 73:6 pride is his necklace; the garment of violence covers him. Prov 12:10 A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel.*

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Matthew Henry This was being overmuch wicked. Hate, an unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often transports men to the most absurd and unreasonable instances of cruelty...why are babes butchered?...we must look upon this murder of the infants under another character: it was their martyrdom. How early did persecution commence against Christ and his kingdom! Think ye that he came to send peace on the earth? No, but a sword, such a sword as this. A passive testimony was hereby given to the Lord Jesus...so now, at two years old, he had contemporary witnesses to him of the same age. They shed their blood for him, who afterwards shed his for them. These were the infantry of the noble army of martyrs. If these infants were thus baptized with blood, though it were their own, into the church triumphant, it could not be said but that, with what they got in heaven, they were abundantly recompensed for what they lost on earth. Out of the mouths of these babes and sucklings God did perfect his praise; otherwise, it is not good to the Almighty that he should thus afflict.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying,

20 "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead."

Jewish historian Josephus he was seized with a disease which burned him inwardly with an inexpressible torture; that he was insatiably greedy of meat; had the colic, and gout, and dropsy; such an intolerable stench attended his disease, that none could come near him: and so passionate and impatient was he, that he was a torment to himself, and a terror to all that attended him: his innate cruelty, being thus exasperated, made him more barbarous than ever; having ordered his own son to be put to death, he imprisoned many of the nobility and highborn, and ordered that as soon as he was dead they should be put to death.

21 And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee,

23 and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Again God goes ahead of, to direct toward.. We shouldn't move one way or the other w/o Divine orders. Some change directions like they change channels. **If we stay fixedly abiding God will do His part of directing. Ps 139:5 Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me.**

Angels come to Joseph in Egypt, to Ezekiel in Babylon, and to John in Patmos. **John 7:17 "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself"** It's not God when pressured, manipulation, chided, sentimentality, circumstantial, unflexible **If we wait and pray and get to know Him in close fellowship we'll always be led in His ways.**

When Herod died kingdom split up. Romans trusted him and let him preside over huge territory. He knew his sons never be given such power so he divided kingdom a part to each of three sons. – Judaea to **Archelaus**; Galilee to Herod **Antipas**; and the northeast and beyond Jordan to **Philip**.

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Archelaus a bad king tried to out Herod, his father Herod in brutality. Slaughter 3000 of the most prominent and influential people in the country.

Jesus the Nazarene. *Is 11:1 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

Branch is netzar –Jesus being from the city of Nazareth is a branch out of it.

A term of derision enemies of Christ labeled Him w/ to prejudice others. No good expected and no respect paid to one from Nazareth. ***'can anything good come out of Nazareth?'***

Ch 2 closes w/ Jesus as a child ---- Ch 3 opens w/ Him as a man or 30 years of silence. 90% of Jesus life was in Nazareth unrecorded.

In **obscurity** there was **safety**. But now w/ **notoriety** comes many **temptations**.