

THE BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR

– DECEMBER 26. – MATT. 2:1-12. –

Golden Text: – "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." – Matt. 1:21.

NOT until some time after Pentecost was the "middle wall of partition" between Jews and Gentiles broken down, as St. Paul explains. For more than eighteen centuries previous all of God's favors and promises were made to the Jews exclusively and only through their prophets did he speak and only to them. Only their kings and priests were in any sense recognized by the Lord. This was not because there were not noble minds amongst other peoples, but because, in the working out of the great Divine Program the seed of Abraham was specially selected – although declared by the Lord to be a crooked and perverse people. Because they had no special revelation from God, the nobler minds amongst the other nations gave special study to the starry heavens along the lines of astronomy or astrology. The stars were charted and certain lessons were said to be learned therefrom bearing upon humanity's welfare.

At the time of the birth of the Savior, God made some astrological sign of the momentous event, which the wise men of the East, described in our study, understood. Reverentially they followed the guiding star from their home in the East, possibly Persia. How the star led we are not informed, but apparently its leading discontinued when they reached Judea, and naturally they went to the palace of King Herod inquiring for "him that is born King of the Jews." The mistake was quite reasonable. It required some time for us to learn that Divine favors and blessings are not always to the rich and the great, but oftenest for "the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom." (Jas. 2:5.) The filled, the rich, the satisfied, are frequently less interested in the

Savior than are the poor, because they do not realize so great need for him and for the Millennial Kingdom of righteousness and blessing which he is to establish. For that matter, however, only the comparatively few were interested at our Lord's First Advent, as the Scriptures intimate that comparatively few will be longing for his Second Advent and the establishment of his Kingdom.

Herod affected an interest with the wise men in their search, but merely that he might thwart the Divine purpose by destroying the Child, that thus the Kingdom of Israel might be preserved to his own family – as it was through his six successors who bore his name, Herod. As the announcement of Jesus the Babe troubled the great at that day, similarly, we may be sure, any announcement of Jesus as the King of Glory to take over the dominion of the world, if corroborated, would cause consternation amongst the rulers of earth today – financial, political, etc. All have unfinished plans more or less selfish, and all instinctively realize that the inauguration of a reign of absolute righteousness would interfere with the business and schemes and trusts and corners, grafting and trickery, which are getting such a hold upon the highest civilization of our day.

The prophecies were searched and it was learned that the humble city of Bethlehem would be the honored place of our Savior's birth. The crafty Herod feigned reverence and his desire to worship the Heaven-appointed King, but only that he might subsequently destroy him – as a little later he attempted to do in causing the slaughter of the innocents from two years old and under. But how foolish was his endeavor to thwart the Almighty!

The wise men who sought the Babe of Bethlehem with worship and gifts, symbolized, perhaps, the great fact that those are truly wise who ever since have sought the Divinely appointed King and who bring to him the incense of their devotion, and as gifts all their talents and powers. Such lay their very lives at the

Savior's feet, as St. Paul explains: "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God." – Rom. 12:1.

The name Jesus is the Greek form for Joshua, signifying Savior; and in the Syriac, Savior signifies life-giver. Therefore, the Babe that was born to be King of the *Jews* was to be the Savior, the Life-Giver of the *world*. He has not become the Life-Giver yet, nor the King. His great work is still future. It will be at his Second Coming that he will appear in his glory and become the King of Israel – on the spirit plane. Then, too, as the out-working of that glorious Empire which he will establish, he will be the world's Life-Giver, [R4534 : page 376] its great physician, and all mankind will be blessed with the glorious opportunity of becoming "Israelites indeed." The Empire of Sin will be overthrown and the darkness, ignorance and superstition connected therewith will be dissolved in the glorious light of Truth and grace which then will overspread the world.

True, in a certain sense, Messiah's Kingdom, rule, dominion, may be said to be already begun – begun at Pentecost. In a similar sense his work of saving sinners may be said to have begun there. But as respects the world's salvation, what has been accomplished during the past nineteen centuries is merely preliminary work to that which Jesus will accomplish when "he shall take unto himself his great power and reign" at the beginning of the Millennial Age. Those who now become his people are the favored few, "not many great, not many wise, not many learned," a "little flock" [R4535 : page 376] altogether. These he deals with on the basis of faith. They have sickness, pain, trouble, sorrow, as other men, but they believe God and act accordingly, and have the Spirit's testimony that they are children of God, called out from the world to be joint-heirs with their Savior. Their salvation begins now in the sense of reformation and rest in the Lord's promises, but, as the Apostle declares, they are not saved actually, but "*saved by hope*." For the actual salvation they must await the

Second Coming of the Redeemer in the end of this Age to gather them as his jewels and to actually save them from sin and from death, by granting them a share in the First Resurrection.

Neither can it be properly said that Jesus reigns over the Church, his "members," his "espoused," soon to become his Bride. Toward her his attitude is that of teacher, Elder Brother, Lord, Head. His promise to her is that when he shall take his great power and establish his Throne of Empire over earth, she shall sit with him in that Throne as his Bride and Joint-heir. She shall be associated with him in judging or disciplining the world, incidental to its uplifting to human perfection – to more than Adam possessed and lost and that Jesus redeemed. Ah, yes, there is a depth of meaning in this word Jesus – Savior. Only with the conclusion of this Age and the experience of the resurrection "change" will the Church enjoy the promised reward that shall be brought unto her at his revelation. And only at the conclusion of the Millennial Age will the full meaning of Savior be appreciated by the world. By them the willing of earth's millions will have become "his people," saved from their sins, while the incorrigible will be utterly destroyed in the Second Death.

