

Dec 14th 2008: The Dark Side of Christmas: Matthew 2:1-18 (Jer 31)

Last Christmas.....the film 'The Nativity'...released.....what surprised people...violence
It began.....not with.....but with the **soldiers of Herod** riding.....

It's refers of course to that part of the Christmas story.....that we tend to hurry past
It's the part that is not family friendly
 It reeks of evil rather than good.....highlighting all the bad stuff

All the horrible happenings.....that I see as...**THE DARK SIDE OF CHRISTMAS**

- **What King Herod did was absolutely horrible**

Motivated by arrogancegreed....self preservation.....and the evil intent of his heart
He set out to destroywhat he saw as a threat to his position of power
He was a very cruel man.....killed...3 sons, 2 b in law, 1 wife

BUT...Little did he realize that he was being manipulated.....by a force much greater..
A spiritual and supernatural power.....that was pure evil

- **For the coming of Christ.....**into this world where sin dominated.....
...was nothing less than the clash of two kingdoms

The kingdom of darkness invaded by the Kingdom of God

I don't mean to infer.....That the Kingdom of God had no presence...earth...**prior**
God never abandoned this world.....or the people He had made for fellowship
As Paul states in Romans...God's love...mercy....power...goodness
 have clearly been seen

- **But since Adam** and Eve had made the choice....to allow sin into
God also allowed mankind the freedom to exp the consequences

Yet He was always available to help those who would receive His help
and it was always God's intention to provide us with a Saviour

A way of escape.....A Way back into His forever family

- **And it's in the Bible**.....Right from the very first book.....**GENESIS**.....
 ...that we have the record of God putting His plan.....into action

and it's in that same record....also see.....the signs of the evil one at work
 Constantly attempting to thwart God's redemptive designs.

- **What we find happening in Bethlehem**.....after the visit of the wise men.....
Is the Prince of Darkness.....using the depravity that dwelt so strongly...heart of
 ..to destroyborn of the virgin.....

For he knew that the battle had reached new heights

The ultimate disaster for the kingdom of darkness.....was bound up in the existence of..

- **However what Matthew tells us**.....is that the attack from the Prince.....
 did not take...by surprise.....

Regarding the flight of.....into Egypt.....Matthew 2: 15 says

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called
 my son."

God through the prophet Hosea.....had foretold that centuries before

- **Regarding** the tragic killing of those children.....
 .Matthew refers to the fulfilling of Jer 31:15
 "A voice is heard in Ramah,
 mourning and great weeping,
 Rachel weeping for her children
 and refusing to be comforted,
 because her children are no more."

This prophecy is part of a chapter from Jeremiah.....is unusual

Because it is a chapter of joy and of hope

(If you can find time to read.....you will recognize)

- **It's a prediction of the future deliverance**.....from exile
A mainly happy chapter.....yet in the middle....this verse about suffering & sadness

As though God was preparing them and us for what lay ahead:-

Yes great deliverance will come.....but with the coming**be** sadness followed by
 eventual rejoicing

It is import to note....the verse in Jeremiah 31....that follows verse Matt quoted—31:16

*This is what the LORD says:
 "Restrain your voice from weeping
 and your eyes from tears,
 for your work will be rewarded,"
 declares the LORD.
 "They will return from the land of the enemy.
 So there is hope for your future,"
 declares the LORD.
 "Your children will return to their own land.*

→ **Because of what that baby went on to do**

Because of His death.....We now believe that
 Those children who Herod murdered.....died...
 only to be taken by God into His Kingdom.....thro the gate.....

But we also know....that although Christ defeated sin and death
 His final victory is still to come

- **Until then the world** is still dominated by sin
 The Dark side.....that was there at Christmas.....is still active today

Children are still being mistreated.....even slaughtered today
Evil continues to manipulate men and women **to do wrong** rather than good
And the cost paid by the innocent.....is still horrendous

Jesus warned us...that we who follow Him...**are now** involved in this battle
He calls us to make a difference in a world where hunger abounds
 Where needs are plentiful
And where Christ's people working together...can make a difference

- **In His ministry** He revealed God's love for us.....and the way of redemption
Yet He also spoke out against the evils of oppression.....injustic.....apathy

He let us know that the way for Him....was to be that of a seed.....**that sacrifices**...
 So that it may bear much fruit
Then He called us also.....to take up our cross...and follow Him

The quaker Missionary Thomas Kelly....speaking in WW 2.....**spoke** of the need
For believers to be now what Christ was in our world

That where the darkness is so overwhelming.....there we should be.....
letting the Christ who is within us..... defeat this evil through us

He wrote

"Each one of us has the seed of Christ within. In each of us the amazing and the dangerous seed of Christ is present. It is only a seed. It is very small, like the grain of mustard seed. But if we dare to take this awakened seed of Christ into the midst of the world's suffering, it will grow. In you is this seed. Do you not feel its quickening Life? Then, small though this seed be in you, sow your life into the furrows of the world's suffering, and you will return in joy, and the world will arise in hope."

***"As one person I cannot change the world,
but I can change the world of one person."***

Christmas often highlights the dark side of life for many

Those who are hungry....Those who are persecuted....Those who are oppressed

In coming into this world Jesus showed the power of His light to overcome darkness

• **In Him** ...by His power.....with the resources entrusted...we carry on that mission

This Christmas Season:

As we reflect on the battle we are part of

Let us dedicate ourselves.....To share His love...through **word....through **gift**...**act****

• **So that the darkness around us.....**
will continually be put under pressure....till that day

**When the floodlight of His coming
Will finally transform this world....for ever.**

101 It came upon the midnight clear