

**The Life of Christ—
The Effect of The Birth of Jesus on Satan**

Introduction:

Throughout history, Satan has tried to destroy God's plan to have a Messiah. Even as far back as the days of Cain and Abel, Satan sought to destroy the opportunity for a Messiah to come. Satan helped convince Cain to kill his brother, Abel, which caused both men to be forfeited from the opportunity to see the Messiah descend through their lineage. Throughout the history of the Jews, we see Satan attempting to stop Christ's birth. Though he tried, he could not succeed. After Jesus' birth, Satan used the wise men, who came to worship the Child, as an attempt to kill the Messiah. The wise men came to Jerusalem, looking for the Messiah. When they told King Herod for Whom they were looking, he became nervous, thinking that someone was trying to take over his kingdom. He ordered all the children 2 years of age and under be killed. This was an unsuccessful attempt by Satan on the life of the Messiah. Satan knew better than anyone that Jesus' birth meant that his days of ruling this Earth were numbered. Jesus, because of His birth, could now conquer death and Satan.

I. Wise men from the East

Matthew 2:1-2 tells us of wise men that came to worship the Messiah. It is not clear either in the Bible or historical accounts how these men knew the relevance of the star that they saw, or from what country they came. Some theorize that these men were from the same area as Balaam. Balaam was a man of God who was asked by Balak, the king of Moab, to come and curse the children of Israel. Balaam, against God's wishes, went to Balak and, on the way, his donkey spoke to him after seeing an angel in their pathway. Balaam, the Bible says in Numbers 23:7, was from the East. In Numbers 24:17, Balaam referred to a "...Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel..." In Micah 6:5, Micah reminded Israel to remember the words of Balaam "...that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." Some theologians believe that Balaam may have recorded this event and left instructions to the succeeding generations of wise men that a star—different from the others—would appear in Judea, and that this would be evidence of the birth of the King of the Jews.

II. Herod, the King

Whether or not it was because of Balaam's prophecy, the wise men did come and unashamedly announced to King Herod, the king set over Palestine by Caesar, the emperor of Rome, that they were searching for the King of the Jews. The announcement of the birth of a Jewish King must have frightened King Herod, who certainly must have felt that his job was in jeopardy. He, in fear, ordered that the wise men, after finding the Baby, return to let him know where the Baby was so that he, too, could worship Him (Matthew 2:8). The wise men found Mary, Joseph and the "Young Child" (Matthew 2:11). The term "young child" leads one to believe that Jesus was already 1 1/2 years to 2 years old by the time they found Him. This suggestion is also evidenced by the decree of Herod in Matthew 2:16. When the wise men, who had been warned in a dream to return home a different way (Matthew 2:12), did not return to give Herod Jesus' location, Herod ordered that all the children who were 2 years old and

under in Bethlehem and the surrounding area be killed. This event fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15 (627-580 BC), which stated that Rama, a town in Bethlehem, wept over the loss of her children.

III. Jesus went to Egypt

Before King Herod realized that the wise men had returned home without informing him of the Child's exact whereabouts, God had spoken to Joseph, instructing him to go to Egypt until after Herod's death. Joseph obeyed God's words and went to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Joseph's obedience to the words of God saved Jesus from the pronouncement of death by King Herod on all the young children in Bethlehem. Joseph's obedience to this command of God also fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea 11:1 that God would call His Son out of Egypt. In Matthew 2:19-23, we find that Herod had died and God told Joseph to bring the Child back to Israel. Upon his return, however, Joseph learned that the son of Herod reigned in his father's stead and he was fearful to take Jesus there; so, being directed of God, he went to Galilee and lived in the city of Nazareth. Someone who grew up in Nazareth in Galilee was often referred to as a "*Nazarene*." This term was used similarly to the way we use the term *suburbanite*, which refers to *someone from an adjoining district outside of a city*. In essence, Jesus was an offshoot or a **branch** from a main stem, in this case, Galilee. In prophecy, Jesus was often referred to as a "Branch." Isaiah 4:2 says, "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious..." Jeremiah 23:5 refers to Jesus as "...a righteous Branch, and a King..." In Zechariah 3:8, God tells us that He will bring forth "...My Servant the BRANCH." Zechariah 6:12 says, "...Behold...The BRANCH...shall build the temple of the Lord."

Conclusion:

Satan, though he tried to stop the work of Jesus by killing him as a child, was unsuccessful. The reason that he was unsuccessful was that a man named Joseph kept himself so close to God that every time God told him to move, he moved. He trusted in God, and simply obeyed Him. This is the same way that God can and will protect and guide each one of us if only we will get close to Him and obey Him.

Questions:

- 1. Where did the wise men come from?**
- 2. What is the name of the man of God who's donkey spoke to him?**
- 3. What is the name of the wicked king who ordered all the young children to be killed?**
- 4. Where did Joseph go in order to protect his family from King Herod?**
- 5. Who was trying to keep the Messiah from being born, and then kept trying to kill Him after His birth?**