

The Birth of the Infant Lord

by A.W. Tozer

The birth of Jesus is a rescue, a redemption of mankind from total moral and spiritual disaster.

Duration: 31:42

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:1-2, Matthew 2:11, Matthew 2:13, Matthew 2:16, Matthew 2:18, Luke 2:8-14

Topics: "Incarnation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the three disasters that have engulfed the human race: total, moral, and spiritual disaster. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the coming of our Savior as a rescue mission for mankind. The preacher also highlights the role of Satan as the destroyer and the need for judgment and justice. He then delves into the events described in the chapter, focusing on ten individuals or groups, including Jesus, Mary, the wise men, Herod, the people of Jerusalem, the soldiers, Joseph, the slaughtered innocents, and Rachel weeping for her children. The sermon concludes with a reflection on the significance of Christmas and the need to not be blinded by the joys of fellowship, but to recognize the stealth, deception, and sorrow that accompanied the coming of Christ.

Transcript

We have been hearing very much, and hearing quoted and read and printed, a second chapter of Matthew together earlier in the service, and I shall not read it again. But I do want to talk from it this Sunday, Matthew gives us the story of the birth of the infant Lord. This story is the wonder story of all lands and all ages, and is told by Luke.

It is said to be, and I believe is, the most beautiful story in human language. Told by Matthew, it is beautiful, but terrible as well. The unexpressed facts that explain the chapter, facts that are not here, but that explain it.

They are the setting for the chapter. They are that which goes before and makes it intelligible to the intelligent mind. There are these three things, total moral and spiritual disaster, which had engulfed the human race.

Cannot think of the coming of our Savior to the world apart from this. As well think of a rescue, going out to rescue those who had not been shipwrecked. As well a doctor to a place where there had been no accident and no epidemic.

This was a rescue. This is the story of a rescue. Not a rescue, but one who came alone to rescue mankind.

And thus fulfilled, and that's the second unexpressed, thus fulfilled God's ancient purpose in sovereign grace, the sending of a rescuer, rescuer is the word we use, and it means the same thing, to the world to redeem men who had been caught in this disaster and engulfed in this woe. And the third is the black malice, full fury of the one we call Satan, the destroyer. You and I, all we human beings, we're at the business of presenting one side of a question.

Through this rather happy Christmas season, there is but one side presented. It's the golden bells and the angels who said peace on earth, goodwill to men. But I say these unexpressions make all this intelligible to mortal men.

The evil, the fury of God and against his Son, and through God to humankind, or should I say, loosed against man and through humankind against God. For it was not the devil's fury at mankind that caused him to be the devil he is, but it is his anger with God. And since mankind was made in the image of God, and God has expressed and did express his great love for mankind, then it was to get at God that the devil attacked that race of beings the most.

And so we have in this chapter, and I want you to think of the entire chapter and not one text out of it, in this chapter events that are solemn and fearful and breathtaking. We have a view of life, and we have a view of the human race, and of the religious world and of the irreligious world, of the Jewish world and of the pagan world, of the temple and of the priest and the soldier, all here. And we have this view of yesterday and of today and a preview of tomorrow.

Now there are ten persons or groups of persons which I shall describe very briefly. They are Jesus and Mary and the wise men and Herod the king and the people of Jerusalem and the soldiers and Joseph and the slaughtered innocents and Rachel weeping for her children. Here they are, either individuals or groups.

And we begin, of course, where we should begin, with Jesus, the seed of the woman, the star of Jacob, which had an ancient past, whom Moses and all the prophets did write to fulfill the ancient scriptures. And then there was Mary, simple, plain, lovely little Mary. I have combed over my memory, and I cannot recall the three times that Mary ever spoke during her entire life, the entire ministry, her holy ministry here in the New Testament, which I have for the moment overlooked.

But I can think only where Mary spoke to the angel who answered to her son a couple of times, and perhaps one or two times more, but certainly no more, this quite simple woman who purified herself by doing the one thing that women are fitted to do. She obeyed and thus in her womanhood she became most honored among women. And for this we love her, and we remember her, and we shall meet her, and meekly we shall thank her for saying, Be it unto me even as thou wilt.

So that we have talked so much about both Jesus and Mary that I am not going this morning to say too much about them, but we have the link here in Mary. And Mary, the mother of Jesus' flesh, who prepared within her the sacred precincts of her own, that body which God prepared for Jesus as a sacrifice to bleed on a cross. Come to the other group, the wise men.

Now, I don't know how many there were. Whatever tradition says, usually awful little, tradition says that there were three, and that they represented the three major races of mankind. That I do not know, but it is simply an idea that got into somebody's head.

But whether there were three or whether there were a dozen, we know some wise men, they were the learned pagan religionists of high position in their country. People in meek and childlike. There is a feeling that people in high religious position cannot be spiritual.

Another feeling that people of great learning cannot be spiritual. And here were men, however many, and they, I say, and had high position there, and were known as the Magi. The old man of God, Milton, called them the star-led religionists, meaning it in its purity, not in its modern evil sense.

And they were humble and meek and childlike. And though their high position, and though they were learned so that even the Holy Scriptures called them, still they were humble enough and meek enough and childlike enough in their spirit to come inquiring for whom should be born that they might worship him. And here is one of the sweet mysteries of the riddles of history.

There isn't any reason or use for our looking it up in any of the books, because nobody knows more about it than is found in the books of the New Testament, particularly in Matthew, the second chapter. So though we read chapter after chapter about these men in commentaries and books of religious instruction, it is like a spider's web out of the living stuff of the writer and has no basis at all. We know from this chapter that we're dealing with this morning that their acts revealed a certain inner beauty of these men.

They had great knowledge, certainly, and their human hearts hungered after knowledge. And ought not this to prove that no matter how wise we may be or how learned or how high we may be, we still have a heart. And if that heart hungers after God, then we do well to follow him.

And their frank simplicity and delicate wisdom are revealed here, and their discretion smartly inherits. But of course we understand that they did not do it of themselves, but they did it by the wisdom of God who told them what to do. Now, these wise men from the East are a type of all the humble great who bow before our Lord, and there have been many.

Paul, in an outburst, once said, Yes, brethren, that not many wise men and not many noble and not many mighty or great are in the kingdom of God. They have chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. That's a familiar passage which I'll not finish quoting.

But Paul said that. He did not say there are not any noble, nor did he say there are not any wise. Nor did he say there are not any mighty.

He had an aim before any. He said not many. He didn't say there were not many.

There are still a few who manage to get past the obstacle of their own learning. He knows nothing quite such a temptation to man, or quite as likely to be good as his own learning. A man feels that he's intellectual.

He will worship that intellect of his, and his very education will prevent him from saying too much about it to the public because his very culture will help him to disguise his egotism and his self-love. But this, wise men, is a great obstacle. But nevertheless, there have been a few that have gotten past it.

A few that have gotten through great humility bow before the Son of God. They were the wise men who came as samples of these men who should come down the years. They have not been many, but thank God there have been some.

And so here, parading across the stage of history, and letting us see him operate, and letting us look through his transfiguration, into the heart of the man, we have heard the king of Judea, the ambitious man. Here was another great man. And if these three kings from Orient are kings indeed, then they stood on the level with Herod, the king of Judea.

But the king Herod was ambitious, and desired to reign and perpetuate his line. He wanted to be known as the founder of the dynasty, the Herodian dynasty. And thus he rivaled.

And in his fear he became as cunning as the serpent, and as cruel as the lion. Yonder in hell, where Herod is, they'll hiss him. And maybe they're hissing him now as an infant.

The murder of babies. And then there were the people of Jerusalem. That's my time.

I don't belong among the wise men of the East, nor certainly don't belong in the courts of kings. But here were the people of Jerusalem, and now you're my kind of people. The simple, plain people who lived their lives, and married and beget children, and saw them grow up and die, and were disappointed and overtaxed, and literally in more ways than one overtaxed.

And these were the plain people of Jerusalem. They had small knowledge. And they didn't have too much faith.

At the mercy of events. And you and I are. We can listen to the broadcast, and hear what has been pronounced from Washington or London.

And when it's all over, you and I have to accept. We are the people of Jerusalem, the plain people. And we're troubled somewhat.

And they were afraid of civil war. They were afraid to be too hostile toward the hated occupiers. In the Romans they were afraid, because they feared civil war that should result in deportation of multitudes, murder of many others.

And here were the people of Jerusalem, at the mercy of events. And my friends in Chicago are like them now. The people of Chicago listen to the pronouncements of kings and great men.

And then they go, they're troubled when they go to a show or do something else to try to sort of forget that they're troubled and in distress, and that they haven't much knowledge, and they haven't much faith, and are at the mercy of the dance of circumstance. Try to forget it. And here they were, these people of Jerusalem.

But do you know who it was that Jesus came to save those very people of Jerusalem? And they were the ones who in large numbers Jesus was here, and Mary was here, his mother, and the wise men, and Herod, and the people of Jerusalem, and the king now and again. But the common people heard him gladly. And then here were the chief priests and scribes.

And they were the Jewish religion. And they knew the letter of the ancient prophecies, and no doubt had memorized it so they could quote easily. And yet they were the presence of the fulfillment of the scriptures,

easy tools of scheming politicians.

If you stand for truth in a day when error is in the saddle, you'll be considered somewhat odious and even churlish. I suppose the rock that stands there a hundred miles ashore and peels the frothy billows, beats over it for us, I suppose it's one of the most unpopular things on all the shore for a hundred miles around. Because if waves, billows, and storms had intelligence and sentience, no doubt they would hate that rock.

But the rock stands solid, and the waves break and break and break again. But still the rock stands. And it's necessary that certain people have to stand like that and refuse to be in the tools of the scheming politicians.

And yet they try to use the Church, the Church of Christ which is in blood, that divine organism, that household of God, that temple of the Holy Ghost, that dwelling place of the Church, that new creation born out of stress and pain. That Church is being used, wherever it can be used, by the scheming politicians, men who hate to God, who they so gently and silkily and smoothly talk about when they want to get elected. My brethren, the Church of Christ stands alone like clear sheet let down, separated from and completely divorced from others.

And it's tragic when she allows herself to be the tool, the utensil of mere ambition to get themselves elected. So Herod sent for the chief priest and the scribe. Now if the chief priest and the scribe were to the Holy Spirit, if they had understood, if they had known, and if they had not wanted to curry favor with the king, they would have met and had a little prayer meeting and said, We'll never tell that old butcher.

We'll never tell him anything. He hates us. He hates God.

He hates the Messiah to come. He hates. And so we're not going to put into the hands of a hateful man any prophecy.

And they would never have told him anything. They'd have talked for an hour and said nothing. They'd have gotten around or they'd have flatly refused and taken persecution, even martyrdom, rather than to play into the hands of Herod.

Chief priests and scribes who know the Bible but don't know God, they can be expected to turn up on the side of some weird thing. When Hitler came to power, some preachers turned up on his side and now some are on the side of, oh, what do you mean over there? T. Joe, over on the side of T. Joe and others on the side of Khrushchev. It's amazing.

It's shocking. It's sickening. Preachers and priests and scribes and rabbis will do to curry favor with men in power.

Well, the people of Jerusalem, God said nothing against them. They'll get trouble. That's all.

Poor people who didn't know much and were simple and clean and ate their plain fare and slept well and got up and went to work again. There was a pen set against them, but there were the chief priests and the scribes and they played into the hands of the ambitious and cruel kings. Then there were the soldiers of Herod.

Now, I don't know how you feel about the soldiers of Herod, but I rather pity them. Always present, always there, and they've got to be there at the time when some king or prime minister or dictator suddenly

decides that he's angry enough. And then a thousand miles from the front line he sits in his mahogany table while the boys they call the soldiers go out and do the dying.

It's always been that way. I suppose it always will be that way. Only 500, they said, English diadwins put their soldiers into Egypt.

Only 500 who dropped their ages and slurred their ages and loved their parents and their sweethearts and their kids back home. They had to go and be butchers, and it's always so. Evil and in the halls of state plan their cunning, cruel plans.

And then in the ways of their hand and the crookedness of their tongue they hire boys out. For the boys who have to go, fellows who don't want to, force them to revolt in atrocities which all their Christian, civilized humanity revolts against. And there was Joseph.

He appears here too. Good, honest, dull, faithful, plain, obedient Joseph, the husband of Mary. He had to be a good man to be the husband for a number of reasons.

He had to be much older than she. Mary knew her not until she brought forth her firstborn son. He had to be, to die youth, to be fair to the facts and yet not be condemned as being unkind.

He had to be a fellow. And he had to be good enough and obtuse enough that he would marry several months pregnant and accept as the explanation that the Holy Ghost had come upon her. The power of the Most High had overshadowed her which was, of course, the truth.

But if Joseph hadn't been and dull enough and old enough and faithful enough and obedient enough hit the ceiling when he discovered the condition. But the good, faithful, honest Joseph put his head aluminum hoop and made him a saint. And I guess he was as much a saint as any of the rest.

Thank God for Joseph, the husband of Mary. Not the father of Jesus, but the husband of Mary who bore the Son of God. So we have Joseph here.

I'm not sure, friends, but what would be better off if we had more simple, faithful, obedient, plain people and fewer brin... I'm not sure, but what in the Church of Christ, the Quakers and the men of Christ and the plain people and the brethren of the... and the friends of God and the brethren of the veritable people who dress plain, live plain. I'm not sure, but what became nearer being true followers of Christ than the brilliant and shining and the incandescent who have come down the years before them. We sing the hymns of all the bright ones.

We read the devotional books of all ones. We read the sermons and the theology of the great Thomas Aquinas and the rest. But I'd feel more at home among people like that.

Nobody ever was afraid to go into Joseph's presence. Great big rough hands and hairy arse in it. On his arms until he washed up at night.

Who could smile, look in his eyes, wonder about the boy and yet never question seriously what this boy was born... and raise no trouble about it. Thank God for Joseph. And then there was the slaughter... in chapter two.

Here we have a panoramic view. Here are the slaughtered infants. Looks as if it had been a popular sport from the days of ancient Jews, doesn't it? Here were the babies of Jewish blood.

Unfortunately, a long sweep of the ages to be born here in this tight squeeze of circumstance where the Son of God had been born and where an ambitious and murderous king was on the throne. And so the soldiers went out and among the dying square these little ones gave up their lives with no one to help them. But binding God forever and forever and forever Herod, Satan, they may well tremble for not all the chanting of the angels peace on earth, good will to men not all the declaration of the love of God for mankind but dying and bleeding of a Savior will ever balance the scales to take care of them.

They may well tremble for there is judgment ahead and justice and the God who is good is also the God who gave his sons to die also said that there should be a judgment when the sea should give up its and they should come from the north and south and east and west and be judged for the deeds done in the body for you may relax the day is coming and the blind chief priests and scribes and the butchers of the king the day is coming these little babes under two years of age that were slaughtered in the and you know what I believe and I can't give you the text and I don't know but I tell you what I believe one of these little lambs who died as a bayonet through a tiny baby's chest everyone on the throne of God now and every one of them is there and will be there all of them for whom in a sense

they died afterward died for them and as they had committed and not having reached the age of accountability the broad mantle of Jesus' throne covers all those little babes whether they were baptized or not or whether they were born into a Christian home then there was Rachel and that's the last Rachel weeping for her children now Rachel wasn't anybody Rachel was a symbolic name for all all the mothers whose eyes precluded in terror in their throats the scream that rose when they saw their innocent baby boy who had never yet more than papa and who had never done an evil saw him go down in his blood before the butchers of herds and every whale that went up all the region round about was all gathered up here and the greatest tears in his bottle as he gathers in his great heart the weepings

and the wailings of his said Rachel was weeping for her children and this is a symbolic name for all the world's mothers Mother God hears your prayers and God sees how fantastic fantastic that when God would send his son to die for us and rise and redeem us that means we should be stealth and deception and flight and escape and tears and sorrow and anguish we're worse than God said we were dear friends and we need a redeemer how bad we need him because this is a picture of the world this second chapter of Matthew a picture of the world as we need a redeemer and how penitent we ought to be this time more money than we can afford and when we'll get presents we don't need but one thing Christmas does for us down on our human level it brings our families together we can look on the faces of

our loved ones but let us not allow the joys of fellowship and social communion to blind us to the fact that when God sent his son man's response was stealth and deception and flight and tears and sorrow and death and it's still so in this awful age in which we live I have a tree on the White House lawn and Ike and his family's going to lunch or gather and I'm glad that it's so I'm glad for the four little Eisenhowers that are going to come tumble all over Ike there in Washington as good a man as he is he doesn't know what to do about all this ambitious kings and stupid plain people like us and chief priests and scribes and religious men and the butchers of kings and the dying hungry good honest man but he doesn't know what to do and they don't know in London and they don't know in Berlin

and they don't know penitence becomes us this Christmas season dear friends penitence becomes us the star that shone over us has been darkened by a cloud that rises from human breasts clouds of vicious fear and so while we rejoice together we ought to rejoice with trembling and ye be angry and we perish on the earth when ye are angry and tingled

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