

# Matthew 2:1-8 – God’s Sovereign Hand in the Incarnation 1

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The Advent was a bloody time in Israel as the Sneaky Snake tried to destroy the Line of Promise – the Line of Promise that God made to Eve - that her Son would crush Satan’s head. As throughout history, Satan found a great companion in Herod in his plot to destroy the Promised One. Herod greatly lusted for power and would have done anything to preserve it. In contrast to the Sneaky Snake and his favorite worm of the time, Herod, there were those who eagerly looked forward to the Messiah’s coming...men like Simeon, the Wise Men, and women like Mary and Anna.

In our first sermon you will see how believers in Christ, and Satan and his worm, planned for the coming Advent. A gracious God, because of his promise to saints like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, divinely controlled both plans.

Our headings are: Wise Men’s Plan to Worship the Promised One, and the Worm Plans to Wipe out the Promised One.

Our goals are: That you will see the attempts of the Sneaky Snake to destroy the Seed of the Woman (Jesus Christ) from the beginning of the world, because he knew that Christ’s life meant his death and man’s salvation.

## The Wise Men’s Plan to Worship the Promised One

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

1. Herod was not a true Jew and he was not a good king (technically he wasn’t a real king of Israel). Herod’s father was an Edomite (Esau’s people) who supported Caesar’s invasions and control of Palestine. While Herod tried to appease 满足 the Jewish leaders by rebuilding the temple and decorating it. The Jewish people paid a heavy price for his desires. The Jewish hatred of Herod increased more when he started Olympic-style games in honor of Caesar. He is known for executing this wife and 2 sons earlier in his life. Shortly before his death, he executed a son who was trying to kill him. He was survived by his two sons Herod Philip and Herod Antipas, who continued his plans to execute innocent people, one of whom was John the Baptist. Herod’s plan was to promote himself...much like the later Herod who wanted to be worshipped and was cursed by the true God and eaten by worms...from the inside out.

2. It is to this Herod that the Wise Men from the East came. The Wise Men had seen the star and realized that it was the birth of a remarkably great king, so they wanted to visit. And as was common, important people went to see the king of the land first, so the wise men went and visited Herod. Maybe they assumed that it would have been a child or grandchild of Herod. They would no doubt have expected him to be pleased that a new king was born – especially with Herod already being advanced in age and his sons being particularly bad.

3. There are some significant things that you must note while looking at these few verses.

a. The fact that the Wise Men wanted to worship the king meant that he was more than a regular king. (Eastern people reverence 尊敬 kings but the worship of people was as common. They worshipped gods...) Even Herod would know that no king was to be worshipped, but said nothing against the plans of the Wise Men to worship. Some wrongly assumed that because these men came from the East that somehow they were idol worshippers...but there were those who believed in the true God in many parts of the world. Others argue that since the Wise Men looked to the stars, that they were astrologers 占星家. But before the whole Bible was revealed, men had different ways of getting revelation 启示 from God. We have many similar prophecies about messages from stars...in Joseph, Ezekiel, etc. The cloud and the light guided Israel in the wilderness everyday and Israel were not believers in astrology. So you must not assume that these men were pagans. You’ll see more evidence for their faith later.

b. The Wise Men recognized that this king would be the true and powerful King of the Jews. This is why they asked: “Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?”

c. The fact of the birth of the king that had to be worshipped was providentially revealed to the Wise Men by Jehovah. In other words, God instructed them to go west to worship. And they brought gifts for this God-King.

## The Worm Plans to Wipe Out the Promised One

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

1. Most truly wicked men plan...they are not impulsive. And Herod, Satan’s worm planned. In his worry he was calm. He

gathered the religious leaders of Israel to ask them about where the King – not an ordinary king, but a King that had to be worshipped was to be born. And they told him. They even told him that this Man-King would be a God-King. He was already existing and would exist forever. They quoted from Micah.

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

They also told Herod that this God/Man King would be shepherd of his people...a caretaker. How this must have stuck in Herod's craw, for he was a great abuser of the people. Herod did not care about the promises of the Messiah and the blessings Messiah would bring to the people. He simply wanted to preserve his own power. And even the people in the country were upset. They wanted to keep the life they had and probably feared a new king.

2. The religious leaders of the Jews had to give this information to Herod because he was a foreigner who did not follow the true God of heaven. I believe they told him, not from fear, but from a desire to maintain good relationship with Herod...who would keep the Romans reasonably away from Israel. So it was a spirit of compromise that led to this information. And yet, Herod the foreign worm, and the compromising Jewish rulers were fulfilling the promise of God to his children. Christ would come when there was no longer a ruler of Israel in Israel.

Genesis 49: 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

History confirms that Herod had limited the power of the Jewish leaders towards the end of his life and that was used by God to fulfill his promise. Josephus recorded that Herod killed virtually all the members of the Sanhedrin, and the judges, fulfilling exactly what Jacob prophesied in Egypt in Genesis 49.

7 Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

3. What about the details of Herod's planning after finding out where the Messiah was to be born?

a. Herod called back the Wise Men in and found out when the star had appeared...which was less than 2 years before. We conclude this based on what Herod would do next: Kill all boys under 2. And Herod held this meeting secretly to cover his evil plans. He did not want his plan for butchering babies broadcasted.

b. Herod used these men (possibly 14 of them according to some records) as unwitting participants in his plan to locate and liquidate this King – the God/Man-King whom the wise men had come to worship.

c. Herod lied about his own intention – pretending that he was interested in worshipping this new King – the Messiah. We wanted to "worship" the Lord with an executioner's axe!

4. John made it clear that what was happening was the work of the Sneaky Snake. He was bent on destroying the line of promise. He thought he could abort the work of Jesus by killing him. He may have thought this was a perfect opportunity to complete his work.

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Would this have been a surprise to the true believer at the time of Jesus' birth that the Devil was out to destroy the Lord? Absolutely not. The hands of the Jewish leaders, worms of the Sneaky Snake, were often covered with blood. Jesus later said that the Jewish leaders killed the prophets of God from Abel to Zechariah. And the Lord Jesus also spoke to John about the Jews and how they tried, under the guiding hand of the Devil – that rotten serpent, to destroy the one who would save them. The danger of Jesus' time was greater as the Jewish leaders joined with a hateful foreign leader to do this dastardly deed.

5. Satan's attempted destruction of Jesus took place long before this, starting in heaven. He brought down angels from heaven. The Devil caused 1/3 of the stars in heaven (angels were called stars) by leading them in rebellion against Jesus.

6. Then after creation of man, the Devil continued that attempt to destroy the godly seed through whom the Saving Seed would come. Let's consider some of the examples of his attempts, but only a few; there are many more.

a. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, Cain killed Abel. The attack was an attempt to destroy the godly Seed. God had already promised that the Seed of the woman – Jesus Christ – would crush the head of the Serpent – Satan- and he knew it. (Genesis 3) But Eve then gave birth to Seth, the Appointed One, to replace Abel. Genesis 4:25.

b. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, the godly line of Seth intermarried with the Dragon's followers. But God preserved the line of the Seed with 8 people in the ark by destroying the Devil's seed. Genesis 6.

c. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, 2 foreign kings, Abimelech and Pharaoh (with the complacency of Abram)

attempted to pollute Sarah - . But the Lord himself interrupted them. Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18.

d. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, a foreign king - Abimelech (with the complacency of Isaac) tried to commit adultery with Rebekah as well and corrupt the Line of Promise. Genesis 26:1-11

e. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, Isaac attempted to cheat Jacob of his Divine inheritance and disrupt the line of the Seed, but God stopped it. Genesis 27. But God stopped it – even through Jacob’s deceit.

f. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, Pharaoh tried to destroy the line of the Seed by destroying all the male children of Israel, but he was stopped by God when God killed Pharaoh’s son and let his people go so that they could serve him in Canaan. Exodus 1-14.

g. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, about 500 years later, King Saul tried to kill David numerous times and block the Seed of Promise. In fact, most of his kingdom was dedicated to this job of trying to kill young David through whom the Seed would come. I Samuel.

h. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, Queen Athaliah “destroyed all the royal seed of the House of Judah.” 2 Chronicles 22: 10. But God preserved young Joash through a woman and he preserved the Line of Promise.

i. Under the inspiration of the Dragon, Haman, Prime Minister of Persia, attempted to destroy the Seed of Promise by killing all Jews. But God saved the Seed’s line through a woman standing in the gap for God’s people.

j. Under the inspiration of the Dragon that many kings, like Manasseh, killed their sons in fire. They tried to destroy the line of promise but God always kept the line going.

No one could stop the promise of God from being fulfilled...not one single person...though many have tried...It was God’s plan for Christ to come to redeem the world! No one stops Jehovah!

4. Even throughout the life of Christ, the Dragon tempted the Seed of promise, and when he failed, he tried to murder him. See Luke 4:1-13, for the temptation. Then he finally, crucified Jesus.

Luke 4: 28 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.

What the Dragon didn’t realize was that in wounding the Seed’s heel – for it was only minor and temporary and he would be raised up from it, his own head was crushed in the same process. The hole he was digging for his enemy he fell into it and died. This is the highlight of God’s plan!

### **Conclusion:**

The Serpent, true to his character, attempted to deceive God’s people and destroy the Line of Promise throughout the history of the church. He had one great attempt when Jesus was born and he tried hard. He used the Jewish leaders, he used a foreign king, and he used the Wise Men from the East. And what bloodshed he caused! What tears fell! But the Devil and his agents only cared about themselves. They did not care even about those who were their children...literally. But God stopped him...on account of his love for his people.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: When God promised in Genesis 3 that even though the Serpent would crush the Woman’s Seed’s heel, he also promised that the Seed of the Woman would crush Satan’s (the serpent’s) head. Nothing would stop that. God had the power to do it and God had the loving desire to do it. This is the love that you must celebrate. Are you rejoicing that Christ came to live and die on the cross for you? Are you living like you know Christ has died for you? Are you telling others that Christ died for the sins of the world? Does someone laughing at you or other small obstacles like that stop you from speaking God’s Word? It shouldn’t. God’s love made him labor for you. Show him that you are thankful for his love through Christ.

Finally, do you know the love of Christ? I don’t mean to ask if you realize it is true that Christ loves the world. I mean to ask: Have you experienced the love of Christ? Do you know it in your heart? May this Sabbath Day be the day that your eyes are opened to truth...and that you experience Christ’s love...and that you repent of your sins and make Christ the Lord of your life.