

A Christmas Celebration *Kingdoms in Conflict*

“Messiah on Mission”

Advent Series
PBC 2024

Texts: *Matthew 2:13-23; Hosea 11:1; 12:13; Jeremiah 31:15-17;
Isaiah 11:1-11*

Matthew 2:13–23

*Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. **This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”¹⁶** Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.¹⁷ **Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”¹⁹** But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,²⁰ saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, **so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.***

Hosea 11:1; 12:13

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son . . . By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.

Jeremiah 31:15–17

*Thus says the LORD: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.”¹⁶ **Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.¹⁷ There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.***

Isaiah 11:1-12

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. ¹¹ In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. ¹² He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Introduction:

- This morning marks the formal end to the Christmas season in the liturgical calendar of the Christian church. Advent season in the liturgical calendar for the Western church consists of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day. Then come twelve days leading up to arrival of the magi and the day when Christ was manifested to the Gentile world (hence the focus on the magi). This day came to be known and observed by Christians as “Epiphany” and is celebrated on the Sunday closest to January 6.
- The celebration of Epiphany by Christians goes all the way back to the 2nd century. Believers observed, contemplated, and celebrated the monumental implications of Messiah’s arrival for twelve days, which culminated with a religious service marked by joyful adoration and thankful celebration to God for sending Christ to bring us (as Gentiles) into the blessing of His Kingdom.
- The events that provide the content and basis for what the Christian church celebrates on Epiphany are found in the texts we have been considering in this year’s advent series from Matthew 1-2.

- We noted that Matthew has carefully structured the dramatic story of Jesus' birth into five major acts designed to point out important theological realities God was bringing about through the birth of His Son, Jesus the Messiah.
 1. Act 1 (1:1-17) reveals the significance of this amazing birth – it is a royal birth, a covenant birth, and a messianic birth! Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham has finally arrived.
 2. Act 2 (1:18-23) focuses our attention on the miraculous means, the theological significance, and the divine intention of the incarnation and birth of the Son of God come to dwell with us (Immanuel).
 3. Act 3 (2:1-12) points to the royal overtones and global rule of the One who is the rightful King of Israel by birth and not by political appointment or by human strength and crafty schemes.
 - 4. Act 4 (2:13-18) reveals that this born King of Israel will become the representative for and embodiment of the entire nation of Israel – rendering obedience to God and fulfilling Israel's mission to the nations despite all earthly opposition.**
 - 5. Act 5 (2:19-23) culminates by presenting Jesus the Messiah as the new Moses who will lead His people on a new Exodus into the glorious kingdom God will establish through and for Him despite personal rejection, public scorn, and the appearance of failure.**
- As we come to the final message in our advent series, Matthew presents a powerful, undeniable reality that, when properly understood, will have massive, life-shaking impact on the kingdoms of the world and on the lives of God's people.
- That reality is this: **when Jesus arrived in Bethlehem, the long-awaited Kingdom of God arrived with Him.** And when that Kingdom arrived from Heaven, it brought about two massive realities on earth that God announced would happen in Psalm 2.

1. The arrival of this Kingdom shook the kingdoms of the world to their very foundations (Ps. 2:1-9).

Psalm 2:1-9: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

2. The arrival of this Kingdom demanded a response from every human being living in those kingdoms (Ps. 2:10-12).

*Psalm 2:10-12: Now therefore, O kings, **be wise; be warned**, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ **Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.** ¹² **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.***

- Matthew alerts us to the arrival of this Kingdom by announcing the stunning lineage of the King who has just been born in Bethlehem.
- Matthew's genealogy establishes that Jesus Christ was born of the right line and at the right time in God's plan. But Matthew also uses five powerful Old Testament texts that confirm, announce, and explain who Messiah is, what He has come to do, and what He will experience as His Kingdom comes into conflict with the kingdoms of the world.
- **First, in 1:21-23 Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14**, which culminates in Isaiah 9:6-7 to reveal the **full identity** of the infant born to Mary – He is Israel's promised Messiah. However, what is even more surprising is the revelation that in Jesus, God Himself has come to dwell with His people. In other words, this baby is God incarnate dwelling with His people and rescuing them from their sins!
- **Second, in 2:5-6 Matthew cites Micah 5:2-4 (and 2 Sam. 2:5)** to confirm that Jesus was born not just of the right line at the right

time, but also ***at the right location*** (Bethlehem), precisely where the prophets predicted Messiah must be born.

- So, by the end of the third act in Matthew's Christmas pageant we know without a doubt who Jesus really is and what He has come to accomplish for God's glory and our good.
- BUT how will Jesus and His Kingdom from Heaven be received by the kings and citizens of the kingdoms of the world? And what can we, His loyal followers, expect as we strive to advance His Kingdom priorities in the kingdoms where we live?
- In the text before us this morning, Matthew makes clear that the Kingdom that arrived with Jesus will face fierce opposition from the kingdoms of this world. AND, Messiah's followers will face ruthless persecution as they represent and advance God's Kingdom in the little kingdoms of the world where they are called to live.
- ***So in light of this, how are we to navigate the fierce opposition, persecution, and malicious hatred Matthew warns us about in ways that please God and win our enemies to Christ?***
- Matthew uses three more Old Testament passages to provide us direction, help, strength, and joyful assurance as we live out our calling among those who are still in bondage to the kingdom of darkness.
- ***The first Old Testament text Matthew reminds us of is Hosea 11:1***, which Matthew uses to assure us of God's unassailable protection no matter how fierce the opposition might be against us.

I. Divine protection in the face of relentless opposition (2:13-15)

*Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. **This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."***

- Matthew points us to an immediate danger to the life and preservation of this infant – the relentless opposition of a powerful, malicious opponent, Herod the Great.
- Matthew minces no words to make clear that this child and His family are in immediate, present danger from the most powerful man in Israel – *“Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him”* (2:13).
- ***Note the urgency, intensity, and malicious objective of Herod’s stated search – to obliterate (destroy) this child!***
- Herod had a long history of tyrannical, malicious, capricious treatment of those who opposed him, stood in his way, or appeared to be threats to his throne.
- He was known as “Herod the Great” for a reason – he was a skilled politician, a great and accomplished builder, a ruthless ruler with immense wealth and great military might – and when he turned his sights against someone, there was little hope for that person.
- So what hope did a humble, poor carpenter from Nazareth and his young wife and newborn infant have against all the might and power of Herod?

A. Immediate protection through divine revelation (2:13)

- It is immediately apparent that the “Kingdom from Heaven” that arrived at the birth of this infant is about to be obliterated before it even gets off the ground.
- God is not hindered or stopped by powerful rulers who stand against Him or oppose His purposes, and Herod is no exception.
- As Herod prepares to send out a coalition of soldiers to destroy the infant born in Bethlehem, God is also at work sending out a soldier from His own heavenly army to protect and preserve His Messiah.
- Clearly God is always at work protecting His people and accomplishing His purposes for His glory and by His means.

- God moved Caesar Augustus to tax the world to get Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the birth of the Messiah. He moved in the heavens to get the magi from Babylon to Bethlehem to worship the Messiah. And now God uses the malicious opposition of Herod to get the Messiah to Egypt – not just for personal protection but to accomplish an important theological purpose!

B. Personal preservation through the obedience of a devoted servant (2:14)

- This is the second of three massive disruptions and displacements that the arrival of Jesus created for Joseph (1:18-25; 2:13-14; 2:19-23).
- Joseph’s association with Jesus created massive upheaval, personal discomfort, and long-term disruption of the plans he may have had for his life and for his family.
- What Joseph experienced personally when Jesus came into his life is similar to how our own lives will be affected when Jesus comes into our lives to stay!
- Each time God interrupted and disrupted Joseph’s life, he responded in complete submission and compliant obedience. *“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him”* (1:24); *“And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt”* (2:14); *“And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel”* (2:21).
- Joseph’s life and character were marked by the quality of consistent obedience to God. He lived in obedience to the Word of God he possessed (1:19 – *“he was a just man”*), and he rendered immediate obedience to the ongoing revelation God gave him.
- What is stunning is that in every case, his full obedience was rendered without the benefit of full understanding of what God was really doing in the larger scheme of His will.

- And what God was doing was far more than preserving Joseph and Mary from the wrath of a mad king over a tiny kingdom in the Roman Empire. ***God was on a mission to get Jesus to Egypt for a theological reason!***

C. Ultimate provision through the ministry of a divine Son who identifies with His people, embodies their role, and accomplishes their mission on their behalf (2:15)

- As Joseph makes the 75-mile trip to the border of Egypt, Matthew tells us that God orchestrated this part of the story to fulfill something an Old Testament prophet said about another “beloved son” – Israel. (Hos. 11:1 – “*Out of Egypt I called my son!*”)
- However, the original context of Hosea 11:1 is not a prophecy that looks forward but rather one that looks back on an important event in Israel’s history – the Exodus.
- So what exactly is Matthew doing in connecting Hosea’s reference to the Exodus with Joseph taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt? ***It has to do with two things: an important identification and a strategic mission!***

1. An important, intimate identification

- Hosea 11:1 makes clear that God is describing a nation as His son – in this case, it is Ephraim (Hos. 11:2-4).
- Ephraim was one of the two sons born to Joseph in Egypt and came to represent the northern tribes of Israel who, in Hosea’s day, were about to be taken not to Egypt but to Assyria (11:5) because they refused to repent and return to God.
- In the middle of this difficult moment, God reminds the world that Ephraim is still His son and has been since the day He called Ephraim out of Egypt.
- The only other time the nation of Israel is identified as God’s son is when God told Moses to say these words to Pharaoh: “*Thus says the Lord, Israel is my*

firstborn son, and I say to you, Let my son go that he may serve me!” (Exod. 4:22-23).

- ***Israel is called God’s first-born son.*** And two times in her history, she has gone to Egypt for protection – once in the days of Abraham and Isaac and the second time in the days of Joseph.
- Now there is another “*beloved son*” who God is sending to Egypt for protection just like He sent His other son, Israel (Matt. 3:17).
- In other words, ***Matthew is using this text to tell us that Jesus is being identified intimately with Israel.***
- ***Jesus becomes the representative and embodiment of the nation and will accomplish the purposes, fulfill the promises, and achieve the mission for which the nation had been called into existence.***
- Note the similarities between Jesus and Israel: 12 tribes/apostles, 40 years/days of wilderness testing, a baptism of identification (Israel to Moses, Jesus to Israel), and a promise that His apostles would rule over the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28).
- If that were not enough, God Himself makes this connection at Jesus’ baptism by saying about Jesus what He said about Israel (Exod. 4:22), “*This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased!*” (3:17).

2. The fulfillment of a divine mission

- This Son will accomplish what the earlier “son” (Israel) failed to do – ***He will obey God fully; He will please God completely; He will love God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength; He will bear God’s name before the nations; and He will bring God’s light and Abraham’s blessing to the nations!***

In other words, **Jesus is a new and better Israel!** He embodies what God desired of His covenant people; He performs what they could never do; He accomplishes what they failed to accomplish; and ***through Him God fulfills all His promises, grants all of the longings, and satisfies all the of the desires of His covenant people!***

- But what is the response from the kingdom of darkness when this “new and better Israel” appears on the scene? And more importantly, what is God’s counter response?
- In answer to these questions, Matthew points us to the second important Old Testament citation – Jeremiah 31:15.

II. Divine comfort in the midst of ruthless persecution (2:16-18)

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

- The second text to which Matthew points is Jeremiah 31:15 where a woman who has been dead for well over 1,000 years is depicted as mourning over her children “*who are no more.*”
- What are we to make of this curious prophecy and why does Matthew insert it here at this particular point in the story?
- Matthew cited Hosea 11:1 to help us understand that Jesus represented and embodied in new and better ways everything God intended for Old Testament Israel. In other words, in Jesus we find a new and better Israel.
- In this citation from Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew is making an even more powerful point that ***in Jesus, we have not only a new and better Israel, but also a new and better Moses!***

A. Understood in the context of a shocking atrocity (2:16)

- This is not the first time in Scripture that a malicious ruler orchestrated and carried out the brutal slaughter of innocent Jewish infants.
- Exodus reports that in the days approaching the birth of Moses, another malicious ruler orchestrated the slaughter of innocent Jewish babies – Pharaoh (Exod. 1:16-22).
- Just as God divinely preserved Moses, He preserves someone whom ***He has raised up as a new and better Moses – Jesus.***
- A champion has been born in a time of deep pain, horrific suffering, ruthless persecution, and murderous affliction – all of which produced deep sorrow and inconsolable mourning in Israel – and He will deliver His people from all of this pain!
- Like Pharaoh in Moses’ day, Herod has acted with the same kind of ruthless hatred and malicious intent to murder the most innocent and helpless of God’s people.
- But these two “anti-Christ” were not acting alone; unbeknownst to them, a much greater spiritual antagonist was at work in them and through them.

B. Energized by an ancient spiritual antagonist

- Pharaoh and Herod are two antagonists in a long line of earthly rulers and powerful leaders who stand against Christ and oppose His people. Behind these earthly “anti-Christ” stands an ancient enemy of God – Satan.
- Revelation 11:15 announces the outcome of a war between the two kingdoms representing two realms. This war has been waged since Genesis 3:15 – *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord (God) and of his Christ, and he (Christ) shall reign forever and ever!”*
- The next chapter (Rev. 12) describes the long history of this war between these two kingdoms. We discover that the leader of the opposition is a fallen angel described as a fierce

dragon who is watching for the birth of a child in order to devour him to keep him from accomplishing the mission for which he is coming into the world – to win the war, defeat the dragon, and overturn the kingdom of darkness with the glorious, never-ending kingdom of God!

- Just like Satan used Pharaoh to try to destroy Moses before he could defeat Egypt's armies, deliver God's people, and bring them to the land God had promised, Satan has now used Herod to try to destroy a new and greater Moses who had come to defeat the devil, rescue people out of the kingdom of darkness, and make them permanent citizens of the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13)!
- Which is why, in the aftermath of Herod's brutal slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem, Matthew points us to a surprising word of comfort in Jeremiah 31:15.

C. Overturned by a surprising advocate (Jer. 31:15)

- This text is found in a section of Jeremiah called "the book of consolation or comfort."
- The woman who is crying out of deep anguish in 31:15 is instructed to dry her tears because God is about to reverse everything that has caused her sorrow by restoring her children, who have been carried off into captivity by the Assyrians (Ephraim) and the Babylonians (Judah).
- She is told to take comfort because there is hope for a future restoration (31:17-18), God will bring about repentance (31:19), He will show mercy (31:20), He will restore their fortunes (31:23-24), and He will give them rest (32:25).
- All of this will happen because God will make a New Covenant with Israel and Judah – a better covenant than the one He gave them through Moses – and this covenant will be inaugurated by a new and greater prophet – Jesus!
- **Put simply**, out of sorrow, anguish, and affliction God will comfort His people through the ministry of *a Prophet*

greater than Moses who will give them a better righteousness based on a better covenant empowered by a better Spirit and who will give them a better kingdom.

- **Jesus is a new and better Moses!** But this new and better Moses is safely secreted away in Egypt until the time is right for His return to the land of Israel – the land God promised to give to Him and to His people as an everlasting possession!
- ***Which bring us to the third and final prophetic text to which Matthew points (Isa. 11:1) to make the point that God will grant approval to His champion by an unusual means and at an unusual time, and will grant to Him unusual success!***

III. Divine approval despite public rejection (2:19-23)

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

- When we arrive at the end of Matthew’s birth narratives, Herod has died but his kingdom seems to roll along with little to no interruption. Nothing has changed except the name of the person sitting on the throne.
- There is the same relentless determination to oppose the Kingdom of God and the One who has come to announce its arrival and establish its supremacy over the kingdoms of the world. There’s just a new face on the throne.
- However, Matthew wants you to know that everything has changed! God has moved heaven and earth to get all the players to the right place at the right time for the birth of His Messiah, and now God has one more place where Messiah must

go – to a little town in northern Galilee called Nazareth. He must go there because the entire prophetic witness announced that King Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

- A Nazarene was someone from Nazareth. The problem is that no Old Testament prophet ever predicted that Messiah would come from Nazareth. In fact, for most of the time the Old Testament prophets were preaching, Nazareth may not have even existed yet.
- So what does Matthew mean when he states that the prophets as a whole witness that Messiah would be called a Nazarene? I think there are two ideas here.

A. He would be publicly despised and rejected (Isa. 53:3)

- Nazareth was a small town in a part of Israel that all of the movers and shakers would have despised – it was located in Galilee of the Gentiles.
- No one every expected a “hick from the sticks” of Nazareth to be the Messiah (see Nathaniel’s comment in John 1:46).
- When people called Jesus “the Nazarene” it was not a compliment – it was a term of derision.
- In fact, this is what was put on the cross above His head – Jesus of Nazareth – King of the Jews! And all who saw it wagged their heads and mocked!
- This same mocking was attached to his followers, who were called “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5).
- But there was more to the story than meets the eye!

B. He would be divinely approved and empowered (Isa. 11:1)

- The terms “Nazareth” and “Nazarene” come from a Hebrew word which means “branch.”
- In other words, Nazareth was “Branchville” and someone from Branchville, Galilee, might be called a “Branchvillian” or a Nazarene.

- Though the town of Nazareth did not exist in Isaiah’s day, Isaiah did talk about Someone who would come and change everything for God’s people – and this person would be identified as David’s “branch”!
- Listen to how Isaiah describes this “branch person” and pay particular attention to what will happen when He arrives:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.
- **Jesus is a new and better branch from David’s roots!**
 - *Who will fulfill all of God’s promises.*
 - *Who will accomplish all of God’s objectives.*
 - *Who will defeat all of God’s enemies.*
 - *Who will establish God’s kingdom.*
 - *Who will bestow all of God’s blessings.*

Conclusion: *Personal application – how are we supposed to respond?*

For a long while, that “branch” was secreted away in Nazareth, quietly growing in favor with God and man. BUT . . . 30 years later, by the end of Matthew’s Gospel, we see that this branch has been empowered by God, endued by His Spirit, and enabled to bear much fruit!

The Kingdom of God has invaded the kingdom of the world and God is at work delivering people from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son!

First 12, then 120, then 500 witnesses of His resurrection, then tens of thousands throughout the Roman Empire, and now hundreds of millions in every country, nation, and continent on earth – all worshippers of God who have been redeemed by Jesus and rescued from the domain of darkness and made citizens of the glorious Kingdom of God's dear Son!

One day we will stand before His throne and worship side by side with an innumerable throng of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue who have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and given a place in the Kingdom of this Son!

What does all this mean for us in our day and in our place?

Since the Kingdom of Heaven has invaded the kingdoms of this world and God is still at work rescuing people from the kingdom of darkness and granting them citizenship in the Kingdom of His Son, we must use our lives, our circumstances, our resources, and our strength to advance the right kingdom!

This means that we must each strive to

**seek His Kingdom fervently,
serve His purposes faithfully,
advance His gospel personally, and
enjoy His presence passionately.**