

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON GOD'S GREAT HOPE FOR A BROKEN WORLD

What happened at Newtown, Connecticut was a grim reminder that we live in a fallen world.

If man's greatest need was financial, God would have sent a banker or financier.

If man's greatest need was technological, God would have sent a scientist or engineer.

If man's greatest need was medical, God would have sent a doctor.

But God sent a Saviour because man's greatest need is spiritual.

As we ponder the contrast between the depravity of the world and the hopeless that sin and evil bring, we experience afresh the reality and the hope of Jesus' birth in our lives.

We, the recipients of God's love and mercy, are not to stay being a recipient.

We are called to be the messengers of Good News to our friends, relatives, associates, and neighbours.

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WARMING UP

1. What does Jesus' birth mean to you personally?
2. How has knowing the Lord changed your life?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Matthew 2

3. To whom was the sign of Jesus' birth revealed? Who else had the privilege of hearing the announcement of Jesus' birth (in Luke 2:8-20)?
4. What was the response of King Herod and all those in Jerusalem when Gentiles wise men announced to them the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:3)?
5. Contrast the response of Simeon (Luke 2:25-33) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38) on the birth of Jesus. Where were there others who were waiting for the redemption of Israel?
6. Why did Herod order the massacre of young boys below the age of two living around Jerusalem?
7. Study what Simeon said about Jesus in Luke 2:29-32, 34-35. To whom is Jesus' salvation offered to? How will people respond to Jesus?

MOVING FORWARD

Whether one moves forward or not is dependent on how one responds to Jesus. One can either accept Jesus' offer of salvation and benefits from it, or one can reject Jesus and suffer the consequences.

LIFE TOGETHER

Let us spend this festive season to reflect on the Reason for the season. And be thankful.

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Matthew 2

3. To whom was the sign of Jesus' birth revealed? Who else had the privilege of hearing the announcement of Jesus' birth (in Luke 2:8-20)?

The sign of Jesus' birth in the form of a rising star was revealed to Gentiles wise men from the East (Matt 2:1). Jesus' birth was also announced to the shepherds in a nearby field (Luke 2:8-17). The shepherds saw Jesus before the wise men.

4. What was the response of King Herod and all those in Jerusalem when Gentiles wise men announced to them the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:3)?

Herod and the people in Jerusalem were greatly disturbed. Herod was anxious because Jesus was an immediate threat to his throne.

5. Contrast the response of Simeon (Luke 2:25-33) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38) on the birth of Jesus. Where were others who were waiting for the redemption of Israel?

Simeon and Anna were among the people who were waiting for the redemption of the nation. Their eager anticipation, based on knowledge of Scripture and revelation by the Holy Spirit, contrasted to others who did not know the Scripture (Matt 2:4 - where is the Messiah supposed to be born?) and had no desire of Jesus' coming.

6. Why did Herod order the massacre of young boys below the age of two living around Jerusalem?

Jesus was a threat to his throne and his sense of security. Some commentaries postulated that Bethlehem then was a small town (numbering approx. 1,000) and the number of infants killed numbered around 20. Demonic forces would be active then, trying to prevent the birth of the Saviour for all mankind.

7. Study what Simeon said about Jesus in Luke 2:29-32, 34-35. To whom is Jesus' salvation offered to? How will people respond to Jesus?

Jesus' salvation was prophesied by Simeon to be offered to both Jews and Gentiles. How people respond to Jesus will determine their destiny. We will do well to know the sad reality that there will be many who will reject Jesus (and our message).