

A NEW LEAF FOR THE NEW YEAR NO. 2497

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 27, 1896
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 27, 1864

*“And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother.”
Genesis 42:21*

YOU know the story from which our text is taken, how Joseph's brethren, being envious of him, sold him for a slave, deceived his aged father concerning him, and then endeavored to forget the deed. They appear to have gone on with sad consciences for a number of years, but by and by, there was a sore famine in all lands, and from all countries people went into Egypt to buy corn. So old Jacob told his sons that they must go down into Egypt to buy from the stores there laid up for the time of famine, and they went, not knowing that Joseph was there in great power.

He knew them, and at first treated them very roughly, charged them with being spies, and put them in prison for three days. Afterwards he said to them, “If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die.” Then it was, but not till then, that they said, one to another, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother.”

See, from this narrative, how, sometimes, trouble and sorrow bring men to repentance. Personal affliction or bereavement, or trial of one kind or another may be most useful to us, by making us think about our own condition in the sight of God, and our actions toward Him as well as with regard to our fellow men.

There may be someone in this congregation who has had sore troubles, wave upon wave, affliction upon affliction. It will be a source of eternal gratitude to you, my dear friend, if your afflictions should make you think of your conduct towards Christ, so that you should be moved to say, “I have been verily guilty concerning my Savior, concerning Him who took upon Himself the form of a man, that He might be my Brother, and might redeem me from going down into the pit.”

I shall limit my discourse to this one topic—in our treatment of Christ, we have all been guilty, and I shall try to press this truth home with a demand, in God's name, for repentance on account of the way in which we have dealt with His Son, Jesus Christ, our greater Joseph. I shall be happy if any have come here in trouble, if that trouble should work with my rebuke to stir up their hearts and move them to repentance before God.

When a certain man lost his eyesight, that sight being gone deprived him of the power to join in many a merry party, and to go on in his former sin. He then began to attend the house of God, and there he found the Savior, and he was in the habit afterwards of saying that he was always blind while he could see, but after he had lost his sight then it was that he began truly to see.

There may be some here who are afflicted, perhaps not exactly as that man was, but in some other way, if so, I hope that they too, will soon be able to say with the psalmist, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.” It will be a good beginning towards such a blessed consummation if they should now confess that they have been guilty concerning Christ.

I will try to handle my subject in this way. First, let us consider *our treatment of Christ*, secondly, let us think of *Christ's treatment of us*, and thirdly, let us ask the question, *What then?*

I. First, let us consider OUR TREATMENT OF CHRIST.

Let us begin by taking ourselves in the mass, without any division of character. How have we and the whole human race treated the Lord Jesus Christ? He came to this earth with love in His heart, with love in His eyes, with love in His hands, with love on His lips, He was altogether Love Incarnate, and when He made His appearance, what was the reception He met with?

You kings, have you not a palace for Him who is the King of kings? Let the purples of Thyatira, let all the dainty damasks of the East be brought forth to wrap the holy child Jesus. No, alas! it is not so, there is no palace, nor even a private house that will receive Him as a guest, and even of the place where others might lodge it is written, “there was no room for *him* in the inn.”

He lies in the manger of a stable because there is no room for Him in any better place. Anon He grows up, but who are His associates? Is He surrounded by the wise? No, they cavil at Him. Do the righteous, or those who pretend to be so, become His disciples? Nay, these hypocrites are His worst enemies. He finds no associates who love Him except a few poor and humble fishermen, and these have had to have new hearts before they could see any beauty in Him. “He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

The world has plenty of music for its greatest murderers.

*“See the conquering hero comes,
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums,”*

sings the world when it sees the warrior come home with his garments red with the gore of his fellow men. Let him ride through the street in pomp and splendor! Run to your windows, climb to your chimney tops, and look down upon the gigantic murderer as he goes along the streets in triumph.

But the world has no songs for the Savior, no pomp, no praise, no acclamations for Him. A few peasants and children do once cry, “Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!” But in a day or two that note is changed, and “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” is the world’s cry concerning the only Redeemer the world will ever see.

If He had been only treated thus—with derision and shame—it were enough, one would think, to provoke God to dash the world in pieces. But this, alas! was not all. We took the Prince of glory—yes, *we* did it, for had we been there we would have done the same as they did, and we really have done the same in spirit if not in act—we took the Prince of glory, we scourged Him at the whipping post, we hounded Him through the streets, having no compassion upon Him. We took our sins, and drove them like nails through His hands and feet. We lifted Him high up on the cross of our transgressions, and then we pierced His heart through with the spear of our unbelief.

This is the treatment that we, brothers and sisters, have given to Jesus, surely, we did well to sing just now, if the words really came from our hearts as well as from our lips—

*“Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree.”*

You cannot stand, even in imagination, by the cross of Calvary, and see the writhing body of your Redeemer nailed to the accursed tree, without saying, as you wring your hands in a very agony of sorrow, “Yes, we are verily guilty concerning the Lover of our soul, Christ Jesus, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

But now we will divide the house, and pick out the Christians, those who do know and love the Savior. May I speak for you, dear friends? I am sure I can say for myself, and I suppose I can also say for you, that we Christians are verily guilty concerning Christ our Brother. We do love Him, if He should ask each one of us, as He asked Simon Peter, “Lovest thou me?” we could, every one of us say,

even though it brought the tears into our eyes, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

***“Do not I love Thee, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see;
And turn each odious idol out
That dares to rival Thee.”***

Yet are we verily guilty concerning our Lord, first, because *we have exhibited such little faith in Him*. Beloved, we must never put our unbelief of Christ amongst our little sins, for it is one of the greatest that we can possibly commit. When Mr. Marshall, who wrote a famous treatise on sanctification, had been for some years in great distress of mind, he went to converse with that eminent divine, Dr. Thomas Goodwin. After he had mentioned a great many of his sins, Goodwin very pertinently observed, “But friend Marshall, you have left out the greatest sin of all.” “And what is that, Doctor?” inquired he. “Why,” said the Doctor, “you have left out the great sin of doubting the power of Christ to forgive you all your sins.”

Surely, this is a sin of no small sort, yet these doubts concerning our Savior are very common to us, and I am sure He does not deserve them from us. Is there anything that vexes you more in a friend than for that friend to mistrust you? I must confess that, although I can bear many things, this is one of the points upon which I feel very tender, and for me to live with a person who habitually mistrusted me would, I think, be like living in the midst of a hell upon earth. Yet we treat our Lord Jesus thus! Some of us habitually mistrust Him, and the best of us too frequently fall into doubts and fears.

I think I may also speak for you, my brethren and sisters, when I say that *even concerning temporal affairs* we are verily guilty with regard to our Lord. We often get to fretting and worrying when, if we were but just to our Divine Friend, we would be in peace of mind, leaving all our cares with Him.

When Cromwell sent Mr. Bulstrode Whitelocke across to Sweden as his ambassador, he took ship, and the night coming on to be stormy, he sat up in great uneasiness of mind, fretting about the unsettled state of the nation, and thinking that he was living in the worst and most perilous times that men had ever known.

But he had a godly valet, and his servant said to him, “Mr. Whitelocke, how did God govern the world before you were born? Did He manage it all right?” “Oh, yes!” promptly answered Whitelocke, “He managed the world with wisdom.” “And when you are dead, sir,” asked the valet, “will God be able to manage the world without you?” “Oh, certainly!” replied Whitelocke, “He does not need me.” “Well, then,” said the sensible servant, “don’t you think, sir, that He is able to manage the affairs of the world with you just as well as He could without you, and would it not be better for you to go to bed, and get some sleep, and then, if God spares your life, you may wake up in the morning, and do your best, rather than to sit here in this state of anxiety and fretfulness.”

There was great wisdom in what that man said, and many of us need just the lesson that Mr. Whitelocke had to learn. When I think of the way in which we have been running hither and thither, and forgetting the exceedingly great and precious promises of our ever-glorious Lord, I must again say that we are verily guilty concerning our Brother.

And dear friends, how guilty we have been *in the matter of our love to Jesus!* Another year is almost gone, let us review it. Have we loved Christ this year as we should have done? Our love, perhaps, can be measured as well by our conversation as by anything, have we talked much about Jesus Christ? Have we said a good word concerning Him in all company into which we have been drawn?

When Mr. John Locke was brought into the company of two noted philosophers—I believe Buccleuch and Halifax—they began talking a great deal of nonsense, and Mr. Locke took out his pencil and pocketbook, and commenced to write. One of them asked him what he was doing. “Well,” he replied, “I have been for years desiring to be introduced into the company of such distinguished philosophers as you are, and now that I have that honor I should like to take down all that you say.” This

was a well-deserved rebuke, and of course they then began to speak upon some other topic which might minister to their companion's edification.

Now, beloved, have we, when we have been in company, always talked as Christians should talk? The philosopher should speak like a philosopher, have we, as Christians, spoken like Christians? When Hugh Latimer was being examined as to his faith, he said that he began to speak without any very great care, but presently he heard a pen scratching on some paper, and then he knew that, behind the arras, the hangings of the room, there was sitting a man who was taking down all that he said. "Then," said Latimer, "I endeavored to speak with discretion."

So, dear friends, we know that there is a God who is preserving every word we have uttered. If the record of the past year could be read out to us just now, would it show that we have talked much of Jesus? I fear that, in many cases, it would rather compel us to say that we have been verily guilty concerning our Brother.

We may measure our love to Him too, by *our service for Him and our sympathy with Him*. What have we done for Jesus this year? What have some of you given to Him? Take stock of your gifts to the cause of Christ. I know that some of you have given even beyond your means, and my Master will amply reward your liberality. But I do know, also, that there are some who can talk loudly concerning the things of God, but who never seem to have had enough religion for it to have much effect upon their pockets. I will give but little for your love to Christ if you bring Him no offering as a token of your affection.

Then, have you faithfully served Christ in the matter of soul-winning? The greatest wish of Christ's heart is to win the souls of men, has that been your highest wish? Has your soul ever longed and panted to be useful to your Lord? Have you ever really felt the weight of men's souls upon your heart and conscience? Did you ever fully comprehend these two words—*perishing souls*? Did you ever get to the essence of that word *perishing*? Have you ever understood the meaning of that word, *soul*, and have you ever been roused by it to a holy ardor which has expended itself, first, in agonizing prayer, and next in earnest, self-sacrificing effort that you might win the souls of your fellow creatures?

In reviewing my own ministry in this place, with the vast opportunities which God has given me, I stand here to confess that I am verily guilty concerning my Brother. Oh, that I had wept more over you dying men! Oh, that I had pleaded with you more passionately! Oh, that I had more fervently persuaded you, as though God did beseech you by me, to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, and to lay hold of eternal life! The past is gone beyond recall, but we must confess the sin of it, and you, too, dear friends, must surely make the same confession that I have done. Have *you* served Christ as you could have desired? Will you not join with me in the humiliating admission, "O Lord, we are verily guilty concerning our Brother"?

Now think, for a minute or two, of anything else in which you have had to do with Christ. Consider, fellow Christians, with regard to *communion with your Lord*. Have you been as much in fellowship with Christ as you could have wished to be? Have you been often enough under the apple tree in the midst of the wood? Have you eaten all you could of His pleasant fruits? Have you been sitting as much as you might in His banqueting house, under the banner of His love? How stands the record as to your private prayer? Have you wrestled with the angel as you could have wished to do? Have you brought back with you an abundance of treasure from God's great storehouse, of which He has given you the key? If not, confess that you are verily guilty concerning your Brother.

And how about your outward life? Has that been according to the example of Christ? Have your common, everyday actions all been sanctified with the Word of God and prayer? Has your business been done as in the sight of God? Has there been, about the whole of your life, a clear ring, an unmistakable sound, so that you can say, "To me to live is Christ, I have set the Lord always before me, I honestly endeavor to magnify Him in all my acts"? I am afraid, brothers and sisters, that in this matter also we shall again have to confess that we are verily guilty concerning our Brother.

Now let us deal for a little while with another class of persons. There are some here, I trust, who have lately been brought to know the Savior. Perhaps it was this morning, or some day last week, when you first saw the Lord. Beloved friends, you who are beginners in the divine life, shall I go back with you in thought, and help you to confess your guiltiness towards Christ? I will confess it on my own account. I remember well when I first found Him, and I remember too, the grief I felt that I should ever have treated Him so ill. He loved me, and yet I had despised Him. He was always looking upon me, yet I would not look to Him. He was the true Lover of my soul, and yet His name had no music in it for me, and His person had no beauty to my eyes. He was preached to me, yet I did not trust Him.

Dear friends pleaded with me to give my heart to Him, yet I chose the world's pleasures and vanities, and would not seek after Him. He came to me, He knocked at the door of my heart, but I said to Him, "Get You gone." He knocked again, and yet again, and sometimes I thought of opening my heart to Him, but instead of doing so I barred the door against Him and said, "I will not have this Man to reign over me."

It was never my sin to curse Him to His face, but that may, perhaps, have been the sin of some of you. You may, possibly, have persecuted His people, despised His Sabbaths, spoken ill of His ministers, left His Word unread, and His throne of grace unvisited, yet all this while He had loved you with an everlasting love, He had bought you with His precious blood, He had determined to make you His brothers and to bring you to His own right hand in glory, though you had no respect or regard for Him.

O dear friends, as you review the past, I am sure you will need no pressing on my part to make each one of you say, "Ah! indeed, I am verily guilty concerning my Brother." Our unkindness to Christ is one of the things we ought to confess as soon as ever He brings us to His dear feet. He has forgiven it all, He never harbors even half of a hard thought concerning us, and this makes it all the more bitter for us to reflect that we should ever have treated such a Friend so badly. The fact that He has been so kind and generous to us, although so long neglected and despised by us, ought only to deepen the sense of our guilt concerning our Lord.

There are some belonging to another class here, and they are verily guilty concerning Christ, yet it is of little use for me to talk to them, for Christ Himself is nothing to them. There are those even here, I am afraid, to whom the story of a dying Savior is only like an idle tale. Ah, sinner! if you do not change your note in this life, you will sing another tune by and by. I know you say that you do not owe Christ anything, and that you will not give Him your heart. Ah, soul! unless divine grace shall renew you, and give you another mind, your portion will be where the wicked lie, forever banished from all hope.

"Well," said an anxious wife to the physician after he had seen her husband, "what do you think of him?" "Well, madam," he answered, "he certainly is a little better today, but I must not deceive you, he will die, it is only a question of time." That will be true of us all, unless Christ comes again soon.

Sinner, you may be never so strong and well today, you may have said to yourself, "I shall not need to think of dying yet," but *it is only a question of time*, and oh! how short that time may be, and then it will be said concerning *you*, "Yes, he is gone," and we shall ask, "But where is he gone?" And the answer will be, "He is gone where those must go who are guilty concerning Christ, but who will not confess their guilt, who will not believe in Him, who will not trust Him, but who choose to keep their sins, and to rely on their own righteousness, and to prefer the pleasures of this world to all Christ's love and grace.

He despised the Savior's power to save, and so, because he would not come unto Christ that he might have eternal life, he is gone, not to his rest, but to share the portion of the ungodly in hell forever and ever." The Lord have mercy upon you, dear friends, if you are in danger of such a doom, and renew your hearts by His Holy Spirit, for His name's sake!

Thus have I, as it were, brought before you the truth of the text as it may be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, and left it to every man and woman's conscience to decide whether he ought not to join us in saying, "We are verily guilty concerning our Brother."

II. Now, in the second place, we will, with great brevity, consider CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF US.

Oh, for an angel's tongue with which to tell this wondrous tale! There is Christ looking down from heaven, and marking all our sin and ill behavior towards Him. He is not weak, for He is very God of very God. He is able to avenge the insults to His name, to cast us off for all our shameful treatment of Him, and to make us smart forever under the divine lash of infinite and inflexible justice. But how has He treated us?

Ah, sirs, *He has not given us one ill word*. Some of us have been for many years living in sin, yet has the Lord Jesus Christ said one ill word to us, or against us, nay, instead of that, *Jesus has put in many a good word for us*. The barren tree would have been cut down long ago as a cumberer of the ground, but Jesus pleaded, "Spare it yet another year." That grey-headed sinner would not have been here now but that Jesus, that very Jesus whom he despised, has stood between him and the destroying angel, and so he is still allowed to live. Oh, that the goodness of God might lead him to repentance! Our Lord has not pronounced one curse upon us, He has not said one harsh word to us, but on the contrary, He has pleaded for us again and again.

Brethren in Christ, you and I have vexed our Master much, and grieved Him sore, yet *He has never broken any of His promises to us*. Has He ever once failed us in our times of need? Has He ever said, "Get you gone; you are an unprofitable servant and an unfaithful friend"? Oh, no! We have not had a frown from Him, nor a hard word, nothing but love. If He has sometimes chastened us, it has been in love to our souls, that He might unite us more closely to Himself. I am sure that you can have no fault to find with your Lord.

I do marvel at His patience with me. I do not know anything that astonishes me more, next to His redemption of my soul by blood, than this—that He should bear with such a poor unworthy sinner as I am. It astonishes me that He should still go on sanding down such a knotty piece of timber as I am, and that He should persevere in making such common clay as I am into a vessel fit for His own royal use.

You see, brethren, He has begun with us, and He will not leave off until He has perfected us. He has loved us from eternity, and He will not cease to love us through the eternal ages of the future. There have been ten thousand times ten thousand reasons why He might have given us up, and cast us away, like broken vessels, yet we know, beloved, that He will never give us up, but that He will bring us safe home to be forever with Him in His glory.

You and I have had *nothing but kindness* at Christ's hands all these years. O ye venerable sires, with your hoary heads, who have known the Lord for forty, fifty, or even sixty years, speak if you know anything against Him! And you young men in your prime, and you who are serving your Savior in the burden and heat of the day, speak if you know anything against Him! And you matrons and maidens, who love Him and seek His company in secret, if He has ever done you an ill turn, or turned His back on you, speak if you know anything against Him!

You cannot, for His treatment has been all love and nothing but love. Jesus dies, and oh! where are the words that can fitly tell this story? Behold, what manner of love is this! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus rises again, but He rises with the same love in His heart. He ascends to heaven, but He still pursues the same mighty work that He began while He was here. Up there, He is pleading for us, and preparing a heavenly mansion for us, and never ceasing from doing us good with both His hands.

Now, surely, when we think of this generous conduct of His towards such undeserving worms as we are, we may well put a deeper emphasis into our confession, "Yes, Lord, yes, we are verily guilty concerning our Brother!"

III. Time flies, or I would have dwelt at greater length upon our Lord's treatment of us. I have merely mentioned it to you in a hurried manner, and now we are to conclude with this question—WHAT THEN?

Thinking first of our treatment of Christ, and next of His treatment of us, what then?

As we are so near to another new year, one of the first things for us to do is this—*let us who are Christians turn over a new leaf*. If we have hitherto been guilty concerning our Brother, let us not go on adding sin to sin, but let us endeavor to amend our ways in the sight of God, and not be so guilty concerning Christ as we have been. We ought to be humbled in the recollection of our past sin.

There was a little boy whose father, to teach him a lesson, told him that every time he did a certain thing that was wrong, a nail should be driven into a post, but that, on every occasion when he did anything that was right and kind, one of those nails should be pulled out. Master Benjamin became exceedingly careful when the post had got well studded with nails, and after a while they were drawn out one after another, and soon his father had the pleasure of extracting the last one, and he expected to see the lad begin jumping for joy. Instead of that, the boy stood weeping, and his father said to him, “Well, Benny, my boy, you see that all the nails are pulled out now.” “Yes, father,” he sadly answered, “*but the holes are left.*”

So now, suppose that next year we should, by the effectual working of the Spirit of God, be so sanctified in our walk and conversation that our besetting sins should be destroyed, and that we should be delivered from these sins that we have been confessing, yet, still, the holes of the past evils would be left, and it is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can stop those holes, it is only His perfect righteousness that can take away every trace of sin, and put it out of sight forever. Let those holes, while we look at them and repent over them, spur us forward for the future, but let us not drive the nails in again, let us not crucify the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

Beloved, let next year’s record, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, be of a higher and nobler kind than that of any year we have hitherto lived. Rise, you who have but skimmed the surface of the sea of life, and with eagle wings mount upwards towards the sun! Up there is the true atmosphere for a child of God to breathe. Rise, you who, like the owl and the bat, have dwelt in darkness, and ask of your Lord the eagle eye that can face the sun, for the Christian’s dwelling place is in the light. You who have crouched down, like a strong ass between two burdens, rise, and speed onward like a war-horse prepared to carry his master into the thick of the fight. “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem! shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!”

So beloved, let next year see how God can glorify Himself in the hearts of feeble men and women. This, then, is the message for us Christians, let us turn over a new leaf.

But what about those who are not believers in Jesus? We may say to them that they also have been guilty concerning Christ, so, even before the New Year comes, *they also should turn over a new leaf*, only, in their case, there is needed a new book altogether, for if they merely turn over a new leaf in the old book, it will be quite as blotted as the past leaves have been. O Lord, give them a new book, and take away the old one, and then they will be able to turn over a new leaf, indeed! It is no use trying to get your old stony heart patched up and repaired, you must have a new one altogether. May the Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit with which to begin the New Year so soon to dawn!

Further, to those who have been guilty concerning Christ, but who have not repented, and trusted Him, and who have not been led to tremble with regard to their condition before Him, let us tell them how terrible is their danger, and how great will be their ruin before long. *This next year, some of you will die*. I am not speaking at haphazard of such a vast congregation as this, for out of the six or seven thousand persons present it is absolutely certain that within twelve months many will die, I suppose, not less than a hundred. By the natural laws which limit the duration of a generation, in this next year many of us must die. Well, then, if you are not converted, if you have no Savior, it follows as a matter of certainty that within the next year some of you will be in hell.

This is not a matter of question or of chance, but if you do not by faith look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and lay hold on Him, it is absolutely certain that, before another twelve months shall have gone, and another last Sabbath-night in the year shall have come, you will be in hell—with no possibility of

escape, shut out forever from the mercy of God, shut in forever with the devil and his angels, and weeping bitter tears which cannot quench the eternal flames of God's just vengeance against sin.

May the Lord sanctify to you these solemn meditations, and give you grace to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, that you may be saved! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 2

Verse 1. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem,—*

Probably from that Assyria which is joined with Israel and Egypt in the remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 19:24-25, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. "Behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem,"—

2-3. *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

He was troubled about the kingship which he had no right to possess, for he thought that, if the "King of the Jews" was really coming, he would be dethroned. And all Jerusalem was troubled with him, for the people over whom he reigned never knew what mischief he might do when once his suspicions were excited, for he was a cruel, blood-thirsty tyrant.

4-6. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judaea, are not the least among the princes of Judaea: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

It was something to get a distinct declaration from the Jewish rulers that the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, for Jesus was born there. Afterwards, they called Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Nazareth was the place where He was brought up, but Bethlehem was the place of His birth, in fulfillment of the prophecy given hundreds of years before the event.

7-8. *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*

Pretty "worship" was that which he would render to the infant King! He intended to murder Him, and in like manner, how often, under the pretense of worshipping Christ, has the very truth of Christ been murdered. Men invent new sacraments, new doctrines, new forms and ceremonies, all avowedly for the edification of the church and for the glory of Jesus, but really that they may stab at the very heart of God's Gospel, and put to death the living truth.

9. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

Yet it was not a wandering star, nor a shooting star; but a traveling star such as they had never seen before.

10-12. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented to him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Very providentially, the magi had brought the gold with which Joseph would be able to pay the expenses incurred in journeying to the land of Egypt, and in supporting his family there till he could return to his home and his business. God always takes care of His own children, and specially did He provide for His firstborn and only-begotten Son.

13-14. *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:*

How obedient Joseph was! He was a man of a docile spirit, who willingly did as God bade him. He has, perhaps, never had his character sufficiently well set forth in the church of God, for he was eminently honored by being the guardian of the young child and His mother, and he discharged his duty with singular humility and gentleness.

15. *And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

Which was true, first, of Israel, the nation, as God's son, and now again true of Jesus, the great Son of God. It is true also of all sons of God; we have to be called out of Egypt. By the blood of the Paschal Lamb we too are saved, and we are brought out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, in the day when God delivers us from our sin.

16. *Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.*

That was the light he put upon it, "that he was mocked of the wise men." He was exceeding wroth and when he was wroth, his anger was terrible. Augustus said of him that it would be better to be Herod's sow, than Herod's son, which was true, for he would not kill a sow, as he held to the Jewish faith. He did not kill swine, but he would not mind killing anybody in his passion, "He was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." He took a wide range in order, as he thought, to make quite sure that he would kill the Child King whom he especially hated.

17-18. *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

It must have been a very sorrowful day in Bethlehem, you can imagine the grief that filled the hearts of the mothers there. There is Herod, who acts the hypocrite, and tries to slay Christ at the first, and there is Judas at the end, acting the hypocrite, too, and betrays his Lord. Thus is the life of Christ begun and ended in sorrow.

19-22. *But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither:*

Archelaus was another chip of the old block, and a chip of very hard wood too, equally cruel, and without his father's greatness of mind. He had all Herod's vices without his mental vigor.

22. *Notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:*

He did not follow his own judgment. This man, thoroughly a servant of God, waits for orders, he has his fears, but he will not even act upon them, he waits till he is warned of God in a dream, and then he turns aside into the parts of Galilee.

23. *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth:*

Galilee was despised, but Nazareth was thought to be the worst part of Galilee. Netzar is a word in the Hebrew signifying a sprout or branch, and Nazareth apparently comes from the same root.

23. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

This is the name commonly given to our Lord in the Old Testament. “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” Jesus was the sprout, or the shoot, out of the withered stem of Jesse. When the dynasty of David was like the tree cut down, and only the stem of it left, there sprang up out of it the Netzar, the Nazarene, so he is found dwelling in a city that is called by that name, and he is also called a Nazarene. And the name clings to him, to this day, there are those who will call him by no name but “the Nazarene.” There was one who threatened to crush the Nazarene, but when he was dying he had to cry, “O Nazarene, *thou* have triumphed:” And the Nazarene will always do so. He shall be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—249, 257, 279

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.

END OF VOLUME 42