

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory, for ever and ever. Amen. (Gal. 1)

*When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* It's all about timing. So many things in life really come down to timing. In a football game, if a throw is off by a fraction of a second, the game can be lost. Cook a meal a little too long or not quite long enough, and the thing can be ruined. Or a fruit that is pulled off the tree too early is hard or too late is gross. It is all about timing. So it is that everything was ripe for the coming of the Son of God. The timing of the coming of the Son of God is nothing short of a miracle. The timing was just right.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law. "The fullness of time"! Doesn't that phrase imply that all things were in readiness for Christ's coming? "The fullness of time"! Might we not then ask, why is the heavenly King running from the earthly king? Since God waited all those centuries to send the Messiah in the flesh, wouldn't it have been wise to delay Jesus' coming just a little longer until this King, murderous King Herod's was dead? If all things are in readiness for the birth of Jesus, then why is there all this danger and suffering and slaughter?

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." And he rose and took the child and his mother and departed to Egypt...

To save his political neck, the earthly king is willing to kill all the baby boys in the region of Bethlehem. It was a case of brutal overkill just to get at Jesus. It has become known as "the slaughter of the innocents". Such butchery was not out of character for Herod. He was paranoid. He was always imagining a conspiracy against him. He was constantly fearful that someone was out to get him. He used people and pushed them down and out of the way to suit his desires. In his kingly rule, he killed a wife and a mother-in-law and a high priest and a few of his sons, all the while blaming them. Now he sought to kill the one that wise men from the east had said was born as the king of the Jews.

In the middle of the night, while others were deep in sleep, Joseph heeded the warning he received from an angel of the Lord. The small boys ripped from their mothers' arms and slaughtered before their eyes did not include the baby Jesus. On this day, Mary's eyes were spared seeing the bloodied corpse of her son. The infant Jesus was fleeing for His life and

for ours to Egypt, the land from which He had centuries before rescued His people from bondage to Pharaoh. This was no accident; this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”

Step back a few centuries from King Herod and remember what King-Pharaoh did to save his political neck in Egypt? He ordered the murder of every Israelite boy. It seems that bigger more powerful ones are always tempted to solve their problems at the expense of smaller weaker ones. Herod’s slaughter of the innocents and Pharaoh’s drowning of infant life are not unrelated to the practice of abortion on demand in the world today. Whether it is one’s political neck or one’s personal preferences or one’s position and possibilities in life, we want to be master of our own lives. The fearful longing to protect our place is so powerful it can put out of the way the smallest and weakest ones – even fatally.

Baby Jesus fled for safety to Egypt where life was formerly snuffed out of infant lungs in the River Nile. But not the life of baby Moses! Remember the little ark, the little basket in which He was placed. By water, God delivered Moses by whom He would later deliver His people from bondage to Pharaoh. Grown to a man, exiled from and returned to Egypt, Moses led them out of death through the waters of the Red Sea. As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, (God) caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them.

In Jesus, history now repeats itself and completes itself with you and me in mind. We were enslaved in an Egypt far worse than the Egypt of old. As hardhearted as Pharaoh, he was not the tyrant and taskmaster of hell under whose rule we were born. To deliver us from Satan baby Jesus is delivered from the fearful and obsessive shedding of infant blood that Herod unleashes.

To human reason and logic it seems all wrong. How can this be the right time? How can the Savior’s coming bring earthly suffering and death to others? Shouldn’t God have been a better visionary and logistical provider? The child King, newly worshipped by wise men is now a refugee.

Jesus was born to die, but not just yet! When the sun came up, Joseph had the Child and His mother miles away from David’s city, miles along the road to Egypt. Jesus would not die a helpless little Lamb. The land of bondage for the people of Israel became the land of refuge for the King of Israel, at least for awhile.

However, when He came back, Judea wasn't the Promised Land for Him, but the problem land. Not only was there no room for Him in the inn at His birth, and no room for Him in Bethlehem under Herod's rule, there was also no room for Him in His home town of Nazareth in Galilee when He started preaching (Luke 4:29).

He would not die as an infant according to Herod's fearful desires, but He would die as a young man according to His Father's gracious desires. He would not die in Bethlehem by the sword, but He would die just five miles to the Northeast, at Jerusalem by the cross. He would not die by being cast down a cliff in Nazareth, but in His death he would be cast into the fire of God's wrath and suffer the punishment of hell as your substitute and mine. He would die as the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. King Jesus was born in the fullness of time for your redemption! Since the law demands perfect fear, love and trust in God, redemption is the absolute greatest need for us sinners who are under the law.

The law shows us that our Old Adam sees Christ as a threat to the thrones of our priorities and our plans. Just consider how difficult it is to see all of our wealth as His and to return to Him a portion befitting the King of Kings. The king on our throne may appear a little more sophisticated than King Herod, but he is no less prone to snuff out Jesus. Not a culturally conditioned, personally pleasing Jesus, but the real Jesus with His real words.

Isaiah said of the Savior, In all their affliction he was afflicted...but the king on the throne of man's wisdom thinks that we should have life without affliction. To the king on the throne of man's wisdom, injustice and suffering in this cursed world prove either that God is not a loving God or that He is not powerful. To the king on the throne of man's wisdom the "slaughter of the innocents" and other tragedies call into question God's very existence or at least His wisdom and involvement in human affairs.

So it really does matter that Jesus got away in the middle of the night! It really does matter that He returned from Egypt and lived in Galilee and was called a Nazarene, amongst the lowliest of people, an outcast to the elitists. It really does matter that Pilate put this inscription on His cross, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews".

In the deepest sense He was not running from something but rather for something. He was running for you and for your redemption and for mine and for the life of the world. In His love and in His pity He redeemed you on Calvary. Then He parted the waves of death in His mighty resurrection. Risen from the grave He rescued you like He rescued Israel of old, through water combined with His word. Now there is another King at work in you, the King of Kings. Under the Gospel He says to you, "Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears...there is hope for your future..."

It's all about timing, God's timing and in this time and place Jesus comes to give you peace! He is none other than Israel reduced down to one, called from out of Egypt. Brought to the earthly promised land to deliver you the promised land of the heavenly kingdom. Afflicted, crucified for your redemption, risen for your salvation!

God sent forth his Son...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" So you are not longer a slave, but a son, and if a son then an heir through God.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.