

**December 29, 2019 – Matthew 2:13; 21; 22b-23 - (NIV) Theme: Jesus The Nazarene**

*“When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” ..... So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. .... Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”*

In Romans there is a passage that states: *“Jacob I Loved, Esau I hated.”* (Rom. 9:13 NIV) These are the words of the Lord, as taken from the Old Testament Book of Malachi 1:1-3.

This is a phrase that can cause our human reason to have all types of questions. As we hear this passage from Malachi as quoted in Romans 9:13, it is also important to remember the word of our Lord in I Timothy 2:3-6 where we are told that: *“God wants all mankind to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

And so in the section of Scripture taken from the Gospel of Matthew 2:13-23, we learn that Joseph was warned by an angel of the Lord to take Mary and the baby Jesus and flee to Egypt, because King Herod was going to search for the child to kill Him.

Joseph immediately got up during the night and went to Egypt. The Lord in His mercy saved the Baby Jesus. In essence, God saved mankind, because had Jesus been killed, the plan of salvation would have come to a sudden stop. This was of course Satan at work, making his attack on Jesus.

And so we give thanks to God that in His Mercy, He was safeguarding our salvation.

But included in this section of Scripture of Matthew 2:13-23, there is the murder of the innocent children of Bethlehem by King Herod, as he gave the order to have all the boys, two years old and younger, put to death.

To this, our human, sinful flesh wants to cry out to and perhaps even against God, and ask the question: *“Why Lord did you allow this to happen?”*

The answer that the Apostle Paul gives is thus: *“Who are you, O man to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him Who formed it, Why did you make me like this? Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”* (Romans 9:20-21 NIV)

We also hear similar Words in the book of Job, when the Lord allowed Job to lose all that he had, and Job also suffered great physical affliction. Even though Job demonstrated his faith in God, when he said to his wife; *“Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?”* (Job 2:10 NIV) Job on the other hand, also questioned God, it was to those questions that the Lord said to Job: *“Brace yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer ME. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?”* (Job 38:3-4 NIV)

And so why did God allow the baby boys in Bethlehem where were two years and under to be killed by King Herod’s order? It was not God Who killed the baby boys, but it was King Herod and his wickedness that led to the death of those babies. Why did God allow it? We dare not pry and challenge God. We know for certain, that those children who were believers, are in heaven.

After King Herod died, Joseph then left Egypt and returned first to Israel. Since Joseph was not comfortable there due to the ruler named Archelaus the son of Herod, Joseph instead went to Nazareth. It is because of the fact that Joseph and his family lived in Nazareth, that Jesus is referred to as, “A Nazarene”.

Matthew states that this is in accordance with what was said by the prophets. (See Judges 13:5) The phrase: “Jesus of Nazareth” is actually a derogatory name given to Jesus by those who reject Jesus as the Messiah. Those who reject Jesus as the Messiah based upon this, also reject the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

We thank the Lord that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem, and that this is the same Jesus Who lived the perfect life in our place, Who went to the cross of Calvary for the sin of the World, Who rose victoriously on Easter Sunday, and Who will come again to take us and all believers to our heavenly home. Praise God, that He preserved our Savior. AMEN!