



The Inscrutable Question: Satanic Assaults on the Line of Christ: Joseph's Deadly Option; Herod's Homicidal Obsession; Review of Triumphal Procession

- 39- However, the line of Christ through the tribe of Judah, house of David, continued on with Manasseh all the way down to Joseph and Mary. Had Joseph been a legalist then demon influence could have ended the Virgin Pregnancy prior to the birth of the Messiah's biological life.

Matthew 1:18 - Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed [**one-year long engagement period customary among the Jews**] to Joseph, before they came together [**consummation of the marriage at the end of the engagement**] she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit [**Miraculous Conception**].

v. 19 - And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly [**ἀπολυω / *apoluo* /: divorce**].

- 40- The verse describes Joseph as a “righteous man” which means that he is a man of integrity who loyally submits to the Mosaic Law, an appropriate characteristic for a believer in the Age of Israel.
- 41- Under a strict reading of the Mosaic Law, Joseph is free to go to the priesthood and appeal for a bill or divorcement on the grounds of infidelity. Since Mary was in fact pregnant, the Levites could not only have issued the bill to Joseph but also ordered Mary stoned to death according the legal mandated found in:

Deuteronomy 22:13 - “If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her,

v. 14 - and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, but when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin.’

v. 20 - “If this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin,

v. 21 - then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death ...”

- 42- Joseph has a dilemma. He knows what the Law requires but he loves Mary and does not want to embarrass her publicly much less have her stoned. His desire is to treat her with mercy and thus opts for a less harsh method of resolving the issue. He decides to divorce her privately according to:

Deuteronomy 24:1 - “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house.

- 43- Joseph was seriously considering the latter course when the truth of the matter was revealed to him by Gabriel in:

Matthew 1:20 - But when Joseph had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”

- 44- Had Joseph not been a man of integrity who deeply loved his fiancée, he could easily have been influenced to follow a strict reading of the Mosaic Law and had Mary executed, terminating the Virgin Pregnancy and killing the biological life of the Messiah.



- 45- Satan's machinations took yet another turn following the birth of the Christ Child. Herod the Great had been appointed king of Judaea by Augustus Caesar in 37 B.C. and by the time of the birth of Christ he had become a murderous despot. He was the founder of the Herodian Party, a political organization that became bedfellows with the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus.
- 46- In his latter years Herod became the victim of a loathsome disease and an even more loathsome soul. Details are provided by:

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, vol. 3, s.v. "Herod":

Herod was the victim of an incurable and loathsome disease. His temper became more irritable, as the malady made progress, and he made both himself and his court unutterably miserable. So great became his suffering toward the last that he made a fruitless attempt at suicide. But, true to his character, one of the last acts of his life was an order to execute his son Antipater. Herod was a tyrant who bathed his own house and his own people in blood. The demons of Herod's life were jealousy of power, and suspicion, its necessary companion.

- 47- Following the birth of Christ in Bethlehem a number of magi, called in English translations "wise men," arrived from the east in search of the Jewish Messiah. It is speculated that these men were astrologers who had become familiar with Hebrew prophecy during the time of the Babylonian captivity. Most commentators believe the magi to have been Persian. They are said to have followed a "star" and arrived in Jerusalem in search of the King of the Jews. When Herod heard of their presence in town and the purpose of their visit he became enraged at the idea of a pretender to his throne. He contacted the priests and scribes to tell him where the Messiah was to be born. They gave him the answer right out of:

Micah 5:2 - "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth [**true humanity**] for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago from the days of eternity [**undiminished deity**].

- 48- With this information, Herod held a secret meeting with the magi where he pretended to have great interest in their discovery of the Christ Child:

Matthew 2:7 - Herod sent the magi to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make careful search for the Child and when you have found Him, report to me, that I too may come and worship Him."

- 49- This was a rhetorical veil concealing while seeking to advance a hidden agenda. Herod did not intend to allow the Jews to even consider his replacement regardless of their prophecies. He hated the Jews and was anti-Semitic to the core of his putrid soul. His plot was for the magi to find the child and his agenda was to kill Him.

- 50- Through a dream the magi were warned of Herod's plot after they had visited with Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child. Therefore, they returned to Persia by a different means than they had arrived.

Matthew 2:12 - And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way.

- 51- Next, an angel, also by means of a dream, informed Joseph of the imminent danger to his family and ordered him to flee to Egypt until told to return to Judah:

Matthew 2:13 - Now when the magi had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."



- 52- Herod at this stage of his life was very easily enraged. We have already noted how just before his death he ordered the execution of his son Antipater. He had already wiped out most of his other sons and wives for fear they were a threat to his power. That the Jews would possibly promote a mere Child from Bethlehem as a threat to his power was not taken lightly by him.
- 53- When Herod learned the magi had fled the country without informing him of the Lord's whereabouts, he mercilessly ordered the execution of all male children in the area of Bethlehem aged 2 or younger.

Matthew 2:16 - Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs, from two years old and under, according to the time he had ascertained from the magi.

- 54- The satanically inspired assaults against the true humanity of Christ continued until the cross. The Apostle John documents a number of occasions where His message and ministry caused many in the Jewish community to want to kill him:

John 5:18 - For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 7:1 - And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

v. 19 - "Did not Moses give you the Law and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

v. 32 - The Pharisees heard the multitude muttering these things about Him; and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.

John 8:39 - The Pharisees answered and said to Jesus, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham."

v. 40 - "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do."

John 10:31 - The Jews took up stones again to stone Him.

v. 32 - Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

John 11:53 - From that day on the chief priests and Pharisees planned together to kill Him.

L. The Lord's Descent to Hades: A Review.

- 1- There are several passages that give us information about the Lord's three days in Hades. The first that we will note in detail is found in Ephesians 4:8-11 where Paul uses as a teaching aid the illustration of a Roman Triumphal Procession to describe the transfer of the souls and human spirits of Old Testament saints from Paradise to heaven.
- 2- In Rome's millennium-long history there were about 350 occasions when a victorious general was recognized and celebrated with a Triumphal Procession. The *Triumphus* was the highest honor bestowed, in the Roman Republic, upon a victorious general. To triumph in republican times a man must have been a magistrate *cum imperio*: one holding supreme and independent command, and who had won a major land or sea battle. The Senate granted and paid for the honor.



- 3- The victorious general assembled his troops outside the Gate of Triumph and delivered an oration commending his army on its victory. He then decorated the heroes and issued monetary rewards to all the soldiers.
- 4- The triumphant general then mounted his chariot and moved out from the *Campus Martius*, the Field of Mars which was a grassy plain used by the Romans for various contests, military exercises, and a general assembly such as the one just completed. He rode up to the Gate of Triumph where he was met by the Senators and magistrates of the city who welcomed him in the name of *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, the Senate and the People of Rome.
- 5- As the Procession moved through the *Porta Triumphalis*: The Gate of Triumph, it was led by the Senators, magistrates, and counsels followed by bands that played martial music. The streets of Rome, decorated with garlands and banners, were lined with people shouting, *Io Triumphe*: Hail, God of Triumph! Then followed a long train of carriages on which were displayed various works of art captured from the enemies museums and cultural centers.
- 6- Behind these came wagons carrying the plunder of victory and cages that displayed the animals of the region just conquered. A flute band came next followed by a herd of white bulls which were to be sacrificed to the gods of the pantheon and behind them the priests armed with their sacrificial knives.
- 7- Next came the captured leaders of the enemy's government and army. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar defeated Gallic Chief Vercingetorix / Ver-sen-JET-a-riks / of the Arverni in the Battle of Alesia / Ah-LEE-zhe-ah / in Celtic Gaul. Following his return to Rome, Caesar exhibited Vercingetorix in his Triumphal Procession along with his family and those who served under him.
- 8- Behind the captured leaders came displays of enemy arms, captured standards, weapons, statues, and, finally, the enemy's POWs bound in chains.
- 9- The lecturers of the general came next in single file and then the general himself. He stood erect in his chariot holding in his left hand a golden and ivory scepter crested with an eagle. This was called in the Latin a *sceptrum*. In his right hand the general carried a laurel wreath. He wore a purple toga embroidered with gold. Standing behind him on the chariot was one of his slaves who held above his head a crown, or *corona*, inlaid with jewels. As the people cheered the slave was constantly repeating into the general's ear the phrase, *sic transit gloria mundi*, the glory of this world passes away.
- 10- Following the general's chariot was his family, his staff, senior officers, and the soldiers just decorated. Bringing up the rear was the infantry who sang songs as they marched in order.