

Today is the 28th of December, and Christmas seems so long ago/2025. I mean, the shopping centres – they seem to be the ones who set the seasons for us...

*I got an email from Betta Electrical, telling me that the Boxing Day Sale had **begun!**. Do you know what date I got the email? 18th December. ... Crazy.*

I haven't been to the shops since Christmas, but are the Easter Eggs out yet? If not, it won't be long.

The Bible Reading for today, is linked to the Christmas story, but we don't usually get into this one.

The Christmas nativity is all about:

- the birth of a Saviour;
- Worship of angels; and
- the shepherds who come to kneel before Him.
- the Wise Men – the Magi from the East bringing their exquisite gifts to pay homage to the newborn King...

It's:

- Joyful;
- filled with hope; and
- it's filled with worship of little baby Jesus.

But, as the Wise Men exit the scene, it's pretty-much like what happens at the shops.

We:

- move straight from Christmas;
- bypass boxing day; and
- we're staring Easter in the face.

Within one paragraph, we move from celebrating a birth of a Saviour, to facing mass-infanticide. King Herod must've been a very evil king indeed. He didn't want any other king, stepping up to take **his** place, so he gives the order: "Any male child in Bethlehem under the age of 2, has to be killed." (20).

Now, historically, there is little other record of this. But this one event accurately reflects what we **do** know about the character of King Herod.

- When Herod's younger brother-in-law was starting to become more popular than what he was, somehow he "accidentally drowned" in a very shallow pool;
- When Herod falsely suspected some officials, he had them cudgelled to death;
- One time, Herod wrongly suspected 2 of his own sons as plotting against him, and he had them strangled;
- 5 days before he died, he had another one of his sons executed;

- in a fit of jealous rage, he had his favourite wife strangled.
He was a bit sad about that, when he later found out she was innocent; and
- he was so evil, he was worried that people would not mourn when he died, and so he ordered that when he died, certain nobles throughout the land would be executed, to ensure that there would be mourning in the land on that day.

Herod was obscenely evil.

Ordering about 20 kids to be murdered in Bethlehem is quite in keeping with his character... (or lack there-of)...

And so, 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 stay there, until I tell you it's safe to come home.

And this pretty-much sets the scene, for the life of Jesus. After His birth, a path was set, that would eventually lead to the cross.

Anyway, there's 3 scenes to this story:

1. The warning and the fleeing;
2. The vile act of King Herod, and the suffering of the innocent;
3. A childhood of anonymity – growing up in a nothing, nowhere town – the last place on Earth, you'd expect someone important to come from.

And each of these scenes, are about fulfilment.

Scene 1:

Jesus and his family, were refugees – they had to flee from Judeah to Egypt. And there, they lived as refugees. BTW, apparently there were a lot of Hebrew refugees in Egypt. The city of Alexandria could have been around 30% Hebrew refugees!...

But being refugees in Egypt, was a fulfilment. It fulfilled what the Prophet Hosea had said: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Now, when the prophet Hosea first said that, he was actually talking about the nation of Israel. God, had brought His people (Israel) out of slavery in Egypt... (Moses)

But Jesus (the Son of God) coming out of Egypt, is a 2nd fulfilment of the very same prophecy.

And the similarities don't end there:

Think of when Moses was saved as a baby (remember how the king (Pharaoh) ordered that all Hebrew baby boys had to be killed, and Moses' parents hid him by the river & he was saved)... And then, years later, Moses led the people of Israel to salvation...

It's a pre-cursor to Jesus:

- An order from a king, to kill the baby boys in Bethlehem;
- Jesus is saved; and
- Jesus (the Son of God) is called to come out of Egypt (an angel turns up and says, "Herod is dead, it's safe to go back to Israel" now), just as God called Israel to come out of Egypt."

It is a fulfilment of the **will** of God, and of the call of God.

Scene 2:

Evil acts, causing immense grief. – young children, murdered by an evil king. And the grief of their parents...

This fulfilled the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

*¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."*

Once again, when Jeremiah first said that, it was about the people of Judah, who had just been taken away in captivity to Babylon. It was heart-wrenching for them, but Jeremiah 31 goes on to give a hope for the future.... Yes, there is grieving now, but it's going to get better...

And just like that, the heart-wrenching grief being felt in Bethlehem,,,,, by quoting Jeremiah, we are being pointed to a hope for the future. In Bethlehem's mourning, there is hope – Joy and deliverance through Bethlehem's Messiah.

Don't you just love the way that our Heavenly Father works through disaster, to bring blessing.

Is that not the very message of the cross. The Son of God crucified – what a disaster!!! But through that disaster, comes the greatest blessing of resurrection, and life for those who believe... The fulfilment of God's will.

And so, we come to
[the third scene:](#)

The angel tells Joseph, "It's safe to head back to Israel." But Joseph discovers, it's still not safe for them to be anywhere near the religious centre of Judea, so they "withdrew" to Nazareth in Galilee.

Now, Nazareth was a very nothing, nowhere sort of a place. You might remember Nathanael (one of Jesus' Disciples), when he was first invited to come and meet this Jesus of Nazareth,

his immediate response was “**Can anything good come out of Nazareth???**” Nazareth was that sort of place...

Now, regarding “fulfilment”, this one’s a bit trickier. Matthew says: **he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.**

There’s a bit of a problem with that. The Old Testament Scriptures don’t say that the Messiah is going to be called “a Nazarene”.

So, unless there are some missing Scriptures somewhere, then what does it mean???

Well, it’s a word-play. In the Hebrew, the word Nezer, means “branch”. And in Isaiah 11, the **Messiah** is referred to as “the Nezer” – “the branch”...

So, what is fulfilled?

The Messiah is “the Nezer”. Jesus shall be called “a Nazarene”. It’s a play-on-words, pointing us to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah...

So, when it came to the childhood of Jesus, Matthew is highlighting what we call “the fulfilment formula”... These events happened, to **fulfil** a bunch of prophecies – essentially, to fulfil God’s will...

Now, I want us to think for a moment, about how you and I can live lives of fulfilment.

And I want to clarify this (before you think too hard) – I want us to notice, that “fulfilment” is nothing to do with:

- self-satisfaction;
- comfort;
- “happy times”; or
- achieving personal ambitions...

Fulfilment is about fulfilling **God’s** will – fulfilling **God’s** plan and purpose.

Now, the thing is, most Christians would like to think that we are keen to fulfil God’s plan and purpose for our lives, right???

Does anyone **not** want to fulfil God’s plan and purpose for their life?

And we like to believe, that God’s plan and purpose for our lives is going to be so wonderful...

How many times have we been given the message, that God has a plan and purpose for your life, and it's going to be so good... And then they'll quote **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)**

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

And we all go "Yeah, I'll claim that promise"... Yeah... Who wouldn't want to follow Jesus, when that is what we are promised..."

But the problem is, that verse misses the 70 years of hardship that is also part of God's plan and purpose for their lives.

It's the:

- joy without the sorrow;
- blessing without the hardship;
- homecoming without the exile.

You see, when God's people were taken away in exile to Babylon, the message from Jeremiah, was "Get used to it." "You're going to be there for 70 years, so make the most of it."

- Get married;
- have children;
- be good citizens in Babylon (even though they are your enemies);
- seek the welfare of the city;
- **pray** for its welfare;
- And, do not believe anyone who tells you that this time is going to be cut short, because it **won't**.
Anyone who says it is, is a false prophet.

This is what the promise really is:

Jeremiah 29:10-12 (ESV)

¹⁰ "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

Fulfilment.

The fulfilment of God's promises, is that the hardships come first, and then the blessings.

- First Jesus was a refugee.
Then he came home to Judeah.
- Bethlehem is the birthplace of the Saviour.
But they mourned for their baby boys.
- Jesus has been raised from the dead.
But first, there was the cross.

You see, “fulfilment” does 2 things. It brings glory to God, and it brings blessing to us.

The **ultimate** blessing – the **ultimate** fulfilment, is when Jesus returns and He will gather to Himself, all of His beloved children – all of His faithful Disciples (who are eagerly waiting for Him). It doesn’t matter how bad/tough life gets. The pain and sorrow pales into insignificance compared to the eternal blessing to come.

But the **ultimate** blessing isn’t the only blessing.

The fulfilment that we live (day by day), is two-fold. Being a Disciple of Jesus, is tough. Jesus said a lot of things that we don’t really want to hear.

Things like:

- “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.”
This has been fulfilled in every generation. It’s being fulfilled today.
- The world will hate you, and exclude you, and spurn your name as evil, because of me...
This also, is being fulfilled, day by day...

But you know what? There’s blessings in this. Do you know why?

Because Jesus has **also** said:

- “I will never leave you. I will never forsake you...”
- “Rejoice, for your reward is great in Heaven”.

Ordinary daily living (through joy and through suffering), is all part of the fulfilment of God’s great plan.

Maybe sometimes we crave a greater significance than that...

We want to:

- serve Him in a spectacular way;
- achieve something great;
- be someone significant...

But surely, God’s plan and purpose being fulfilled in us day by day, is significant in itself – we just need to recognise it...

And whether we’re going through good times, or whether we’re going through tough times, the fulfilment, is Christ is with us. He carries us; He strengthens us; By His Holy Spirit, He empowers us, and achieves His good and perfect will...

He is with us

- in joy;
- in sorrow;
- in the exciting;

- in the mundane;
- on the mountains;
- in the valleys;
- in sickness;
- in health;
- in mission and evangelism;
- in everyday faithful living;
- in life;
- in death.

Fulfilment brings God glory. Faithfully praising the Lord in every circumstance, brings Him glory.

And we eagerly await the ultimate fulfilment – the return of Jesus, and everlasting life.

Let's pray:

Lord, we want to praise You,
that You are the God of fulfilment.
What you say, shall be.

Lord, we thank You,
that Jesus fulfilled **His** mission on this Earth;
That He was faithful to the Cross,
and You are faithful in raising Him from the dead.

Lord, we confess that way too often,
our concept of "fulfilment" has been way too shallow;
Way too worldly...

Help us to see fulfilment as You see fulfilment.

Lord we praise You,
that you fulfil Your promise to us,
to always be with us;
never forsaking us;
strengthening us in our times of weakness.

To You be the glory,

And we pray for the ultimate fulfilment.

Come Lord Jesus,

As Lord and King of all.

in Jesus' Name,

Amen.

ⁱ Keener Craig S. A commentary on the Gospel of Matthew: Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1999.