



Part 7: Scoffing, Weeping, and Radical Trust
Matthew 2:13-23

As God-With-Us, Jesus embodies and models radical trust in God's sovereignty and goodness.

I. A Disturbing Scripture

Revelation 12 is almost certainly an apocalyptic description of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus...We are confronted with the sobering reality that we were born into a world at war.

The gospel is God's invasion of hostile territory ruled by Satan, who uses deceived and sinful people to oppose God's mission of rescue and restoration.

The gospel is God's confrontation with the sinful powers of this world, and the powers always fight back.

"In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:4-5

II. Trusting in God's Sovereign Rule

The nations rage...See Psalm 2:1-6

"The One enthroned in heaven laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.'" Psalm 2:4-6

King Herod was threatened by the news of the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:3, 16). He understood that King Jesus was a threat to his power.

Every power in this world, whether spiritual or human, political, religious, economic, is threatened by God's rule in King Jesus.

Yet God rules over every power, both spiritual and human, as King and "scoffs" at their threats to His rule.

"The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all." Psalm 103:19

"Our God is in heaven; He does as He pleases." Psalm 115:3

"...I am God, and there is no other...My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Isaiah 46:9-10

"God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free...God is said to be absolutely free because no one and no thing can hinder Him or compel Him or stop Him. He is able to do as He pleases always, everywhere, forever. To be free means also that He must possess universal authority... To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom He must appeal?"

– A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

"God's providence is not a code to be deciphered. It is a plan to be trusted." – John Piper

III. **Trusting in God's Compassion for our Suffering**

"Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

‘A voice is heard in Ramah,
Weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
And refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more.’”

Matthew 2:17-18

Matthew is referring to Jeremiah 31:15 when the prophet used metaphor to describe the great anguish in Judah when the people were being carried into Babylonian exile. Judah is personified in Rachel, Jacob's wife, who died giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35).

God sees and honors the great suffering and grief of His people even as He rules sovereignly over all.

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Matthew 9:36

Jesus knows God better than any other person who has ever lived, and he never questioned his Father’s goodness.

See Psalm 13 (Psalm of lament) to pray in our suffering...

IV. Jesus Identifies with His People

In the midst of this evil, the hope of the world is being born.

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. ... they will call him ‘Immanuel’ which means ‘God with us.’”

Matthew 1:21, 23

Five times in Matthew 1-2, Matthew says that events of Jesus’ life “fulfilled” something promised by God to Israel.

It is very clear that Matthew sees the events of Jesus’ life as following the events of the history of Israel. Matthew sees Jesus as the true Israel, who will faithfully fulfill God’s call to rescue and renew the world under God’s rule.

“So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’” Matthew 2:23

Nazareth was a small village of about 500 that was looked down upon by the elite of Israel (see John 1:44-46 Nathaniel’s comment to Philip).

“...He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men...” Isaiah 53:2-3

Question: Who is this God who so identifies with His people that He becomes one of us, who is so despised by men that He is crucified? Who is this “God-With-Us”?

Discussion Questions:

1. What questions does this Scripture raise for you? What emotions?
2. In your experience, has the church avoided hard scripture and topics like this?

3. What is your response to the Biblical claim that God rules over all and has compassion on the suffering of people?
4. What does Jesus model in this story about trusting God?
5. Matthew likes to see the events of Jesus' life as "fulfilling" certain promises or events in the life of Israel. He sees Jesus as identifying with Israel and keeping faith where Israel failed. What is your response to the reality that Jesus has also identified himself with sinful humanity as "God with us"?