

Christmas Discoveries About God's Detours Matthew 2:1-23

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. 9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. 13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. 21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Introductory Statements:

- No one likes the inconvenience of a detour.
- When confronted by a detour, it seems like it always takes longer to get to your destination.
- A detour is defined as "the use of a temporary round-about course instead of the main route."
- Often in Scripture, as well as in life, what we call a detour, God calls the main route - and what we call the main route, God calls a detour - in other words, sometimes the best way to get where God wants us to go, isn't the short way, but rather, the long way.
- We are told in **Ecclesiastes 3:1-14, esp. vv. 1, 10, and 14, "To every *thing* there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:** 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. 9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? 10 **I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in**

it. 11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God. 14 **I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.**"

- And we see in **Proverbs 3:5-6**, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
- We can see several such detours in the Christmas story. Let's see what we can learn from those detours.

I. Three Detours in the Christmas Story:

A. **The Detour of the Wise Men - Matthew 2:1-12** - "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. 9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

1. These wise men were from the East.
2. God had led them with the star for perhaps months. Now, as they approach their destination, the star disappears, and they have to take a detour, to ask Herod where to go (verses 1-10).
3. As soon as they left Herod, the star reappeared, and led them to Jesus' house (verse 9)
4. The wise men had to take yet another detour to secretly return to their home a different way (verse 12). Why did God take them out of their way on a detour? We shall see the reason momentarily.

B. **The Detour of Christ's Family - Matthew 2:13-15** - "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."

1. Jesus and His family had already been uprooted from their home for taxation purposes - Luke 2:1-5 - "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."

2. Now they were asked to leave their friends, family, and home, to take *yet another* detour - to a land with foreign customs and culture, and with no kinfolk. Why did God take *them* out of *their* way on a detour?

C. **The Detour of Herod - Matthew 2:16-18** - "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

- Here, Herod leaves his routine leadership responsibilities and popularity, and takes a detour into the world of being a mass-murderer of children. This, then, is the reason for God's detours in the lives of the wise men, and of the family of Christ.

II. Discoveries About God's Detours:

A. **God Never Goes on a Detour.** To Him, it's always the shortest direction between two points.

1. **Isaiah 46:9-11** - "Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it. "

2. **Numbers 23:19** - "God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? "

B. **God Always Has Three Reasons for Detours:**

1. **Direction** - God uses detours to get us where we're supposed to be, and when we're supposed to be there.

a. God used the wise men to be the first "foreign missionaries."

b. God moved the family of Christ, in order to fulfill Scripture, as well as to preserve Christ's life - **Matthew 2:5, 6, 15, 17** - "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet . . ."

c. God used Herod's murder spree to awaken the spiritual conscience of the Jewish people, concerning the Messiah of their Scriptures. By the way: Every child he murdered, was ushered directly into the presence of God.

2. **Provision**

a. The wise men gave three gifts - and although these three gifts were in prophetic reference to Christ as Prophet (Myrrh), Priest (Frankincense), and King (Gold), they were also very practical gifts - the Gold financed the flight in to Egypt.

b. God wanted the wise men to stop off at Herod's palace. Herod's foster brother, named Manaen, would later become a leader in the church at Antioch - **Acts 13:1** - "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

3. Protection

- a. Christ and His family were saved from death.
- b. The wise men were also saved from death.
- c. All the murdered children were spared from deciding against Christ later in life.

Concluding Remarks:

- None of us likes the inconvenience of a detour.
- Yet, at times, God knows that the best way is the long way, rather than the short way.
- As we reflect on what God did in the birth of Christ, let us thank God for the detours He's placed in our lives, and look forward to what He will do for us through our future detours in life.

