

# Fearless in days of distress

---

## The days after Christmas: The clash of kingdoms.

### Scriptures:

- Matthew Chpt 2. Especially vv 16-17
- Acts 4.23-31
- Jeremiah 31.15-17

### Call:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

### Prayer of Invocation:

Our heavenly Father your foolishness was to have your eternal Son cradled and succoured in the arms of a lowly woman, Who in time would in your great wisdom cradle the world in His arms of victory. He who is Anointed King of kings and Lord of Lords, the firstborn of the dead so that in everything He might have the supremacy. We as the magi of old and with all the saints bow with loving adoration before Him to worship and wait for His life-giving Words.

### Hymn: Only a Holy God *by Michael Farren, Dustin Smith*

1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven?  
Who else could make every king bow down?  
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles?  
Only a Holy God

2. What other beauty demands such praises?  
What other splendour outshines the sun?  
What other majesty rules with justice?  
Only a Holy God

*Come and behold Him the One and the Only  
Cry out, sing holy forever a Holy God  
Come and worship the Holy God*

3. What other glory consumes like fire?  
What other power can raise the dead?  
What other name remains undefeated?  
Only a holy God

*Refrain*

## Fearless in days of distress

---

4. Who else could rescue me from my failing?

Who else would offer His only Son?

Who else invites me to call Him Father?

Only a holy God, only my holy God

*Refrain*

© City Alight Used by permission CCLI 509237

### Message: on Matthew Chapter 2. Fearless in days of distress

The birth of Jesus attracts worshippers, amazed rural labourers, a mother beautifully submissive to Almighty God's revelation and a gracious husband quietly cooperating with angelic guidance. But there is a burst of hatred also from the political powers ..The magi come innocently asking where is the one born king of the Jews? A sweaty shock of fury engulfs Herod. He must act to rid this opposition.

The supernatural entry of the Son of God into the ordinary days of Bethlehem is heralded with comforting angelic words; first to Joseph then to the field labourers "do not be afraid" But Herod is afraid.

And this is how it was and how it still is. Anybody who has witnessed to Jesus will have seen the turning away of faces, fearful of what commitment to him might require. The Bible likewise, the Divine witness written, is the most feared book in the world and thus the most banned and criticised.

Matthew Chapter 2 is a template for the struggle against Satan. It is more than just good versus evil as abstracts. It is Jesus Christ the man against Satan the one who has hijacked humanity and earth.

**At Christmas, the clash of Kingdoms sounds on the earth.** Heaven has invaded earth and the world is counter-attacking. The mother nurses her child as the political powers of the day get wind of a deadly opponent to their power. Herod, this ego-inflated wicked king flies into a fury of scheming rage. Desperate to hold his miserable ego together, blinded by Satan and dangerous to fellow citizens, but unable to locate the baby king, he slaughters all babies in the region under two years.

This kingdoms clash continues today and every believer, those whose names are in the Lamb's book of Life are involved in the conflict. You are in it.

This chapter reveals right from the start the spiritual warfare motivating individuals and nations. Jesus the Anointed of God against Satan. Here we see how dangerous Jesus is to darkness. Jesus the true Man<sup>1</sup> come to rescue every human from Satan's destructive dominion<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 15.45-49

<sup>2</sup> Acts 26.18

## Fearless in days of distress

---

Jesus the descendant of Eve will crush the head of the one who will bruise his heel<sup>3</sup> 'Crush' is bigger than 'bruise'. So the final Christ victory massively eclipses Satan's efforts.

Beside the sweet wonder of the birth, is the horror of the death of the babies in Ramah. C.S. Keener comments "The narrative reveals the severity of the political conflict – escalated by the presence of Jesus. Matthew's narrative testifies to God's intervention to effect his plan but it does not encourage a utopian idealism that ignores the fact that God often allows suffering on behalf of his own."

Herods are the handpieces of Satan. Small and big Herods around the place abound through history and confront you today.

The events of this chapter are a template of Christian persecution. 'Pursue' and 'persecute' are related (cognate) words in the Bible. Herod pursued Jesus; he hates his presence on earth. Satan has two goals; persecution and seduction. His tools are *abuse* of believers including insult and killing. Satan also uses seduction by stirring up worldly loves in the Bride of Christ. Satan either steals and violates to frighten or pours worldly seductions on us to lull us to sleep and distraction!

We see Satan's dirty fingering of God's creation and humanity all over the world. Wars between nations, marriages, workers, neighbours and even sometimes in churches. We can't escape the conflict because it arises in our very flesh warring against our souls. But we can be victorious. Learning and applying the Word of God through Spirit and Scripture.

Yes, this world is dangerous for Christians. But the next world is dangerous for unrepentant unbelievers.

### **This Is War. What are principles of victory in this chapter?**

1. Jesus came into 'tiger country'. But He is also the Lion of Judah. The Holy family stuck together. So must we. That is what church must be.

2. There is supernatural activity around Him – angels giving directions, humans like Joseph getting directions. Same now. Holy Spirit guiding us, keeping us safe in 'tiger country' within earshot of Satan's roaring.<sup>4</sup> The ordinary way of life we have interacts with the supernatural of angels' and Spirit guidance. And the Bible also is supernatural as the 'breath of God'<sup>5</sup>. These protections include events you may know nothing about but they continue day and night around us. You will be surprised at how much supernatural work of Holy Spirit is going on in and around you.

We should show pride in what we have from Christ.<sup>6</sup>

As you think over a Bible promise heavenly life comes into your mind and soul.

---

<sup>3</sup> Gen 3.15

<sup>4</sup> 1Peter 5.6-9

<sup>5</sup> 2Tim 3.16

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinth 1.31

## Fearless in days of distress

---

3. Understand the difference between Satan's (earthly kingdom) and the Kingdom of heaven (Christ's).

'Mother and child' occurs five times in Chapter 2. How vulnerable against the might of Herod! How the world powers assume they are so superior to Christ's kingdom. Big mistake!

All heaven's mighty works are for those who trust Christ's Kingdom ways. Joseph is directed. The world's powers are gutted. The Kingdom of God is uncompromisingly gentle. The most gentle entity in the world. Be alert to discerning the seeming weakness of The Kingdom from the superficial power of noisy media, powerful cities, celebrities and militaries. And use the most powerful weapon unleashed on the earth – prayer!

4. Sometimes there is suffering. The mothers grieved<sup>7</sup> in their lifetime. Collateral damage yes. But Satan's agent, Herod has been in chains in hell for 2000 years. I'd sooner be sensitive and grieve than be a stone and not be able to know grief.

Our experience of suffering which is for the greater goal of Christ's glory and the victory of the Kingdom is heroic, laudable and ultimately rewarding.

Here we train ourselves to see with faith-eyes and thus have the strength of an eternal heavenly perspective. This knowledge is power.

And remember Jesus has power to make everything work out to the good involving you at every step. He orders the Cosmos which thankfully you and I don't!

Enjoy the promise in Romans 8.28-39. (Read this and by faith let it address itself to you.)

5. The events around Jesus are all Scripture directed eg verses 5,15,23. Satan struggles to make you live by and hope only in earthly bread. But in Jesus we feed on the Word of God. Satan will keep you from Scripture or Scripture will guard you against Satan.

Reign in Christ over the enemies of your soul. *how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*<sup>8</sup>

**Hymn:** A mighty fortress is our God, *by Martin Luther*

1. A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great, and arm-ed with cruel hate,  
on earth is not his equal.
2. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.

---

<sup>7</sup> Matt 2.18

<sup>8</sup> Rom 5.17

## Fearless in days of distress

---

You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he;  
Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same;  
and he must win the battle.

3. And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.

4. That Word above all earthly powers no thanks to them abides;  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours through him who with us sides.  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
the body they may kill: God's truth abideth still;  
his kingdom is forever!

© public domain

### Commitment Prayer:

Our dear Father, thank you for revealing your Kingdom to us. Help us now to rid ourselves of all cowardice and timidity of spirit. And with all who are sure that Jesus is indeed raised and Lord of lords, to live confidently in Him to follow and honour Him as the most natural way to conduct our lives in this world. To your glory.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

### Benediction:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

This service prepared by Rev Ian Clarkson for HopeNet SA