KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 2:1-23

(Sermon from Sunday 12 March 2023, Zwai Zulu)

1. Information

a) Read the passage at least twice in different versions

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it to the sermon

- There is additional information in the CG Guide on page 23-27
- In particular you may want to highlight the following points, which I spent little time on during the sermon:

i) Jesus, the fulfillment of prophecies

- This might be a good space to talk about the role of prophecy in Scritpure, below are a few thought that can help guide the discussion:

  The role of prophecy in Scriptures is to convey God's message to his people and to point them to his plan for redemption.

  Throughout the Bible, we see that God speaks through his prophets to reveal his will and purpose to his people. Prophecy serves as a means of communicating God's truth and guidance to his people, often in times of crisis or uncertainty. Through prophecy, God warns, corrects, encourages, and comforts his people.

  Prophecy also plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation. In the Old Testament, we see numerous prophecies about the coming of a messiah who would save God's people from their sins. These prophecies find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.

In addition, prophecy serves as evidence of God's existence and sovereignty. The fulfillment of prophecies demonstrates that God is in control of history and that his plan will ultimately be fulfilled.

Finally, prophecy encourages believers to trust in God's faithfulness and promises. When we see prophecies fulfilled, it strengthens our faith and gives us confidence in God's ability to bring about his plans and purposes.

Overall, the role of prophecy in Scriptures is to reveal God's will and purpose, to point us to his plan of redemption, and to encourage us to trust in his faithfulness and promises.

- How does the fact that Jesus' birth and early life fulfilled Old Testament prophecies help us understand his identity and purpose? Why is it important for us to study and understand these prophecies today?

ii) Responses to the arrival of Jesus Christ

- How do you think the wise men felt when they saw the star and realized it was leading them to the Messiah? Can you relate to their sense of awe and wonder?
- What do you think motivated King Herod to want to kill the baby Jesus? How did he feel when he realized the wise men had tricked him?
- The chief priests and scribes knew the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, yet they did not seem particularly interested in meeting him. Why do you think this was the case? Do you see any parallels in our own time?
- The passage emphasizes the importance of listening to and following God's guidance, as demonstrated by the wise men, Mary and Joseph, and even the angel in Joseph's dream. How do you discern God's will for your life? What can you do to cultivate a deeper relationship with God and strengthen your ability to hear his voice?

iii) God's sovereign protection of Jesus

- Throughout the passage we see ways that God preserved Jesus' life. **Discuss** this under the sovereign protection of God and God's involvement in every detail of our lives.
- Mary and Joseph had to flee to Egypt to protect Jesus from King Herod's wrath. Have you ever had to flee a dangerous situation or protect someone you love from harm? How did you cope with the fear and uncertainty?

i) Suffering & evil in the World

- What do you think the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem tells us about the nature of evil in the world? How does this event fit into the larger context of God's plan of salvation?

c) Answer any questions the group might have

2. <u>Activation</u>

- I made a pastoral decision to spend some time in the sermon unpacking the 'dangers of indifference'.
- I did this because I think we might be in danger of having the same response as the chief priests and scribes. We live in SA where almost 80% of our citizens profess Christianity, but there are many manifestations of an 'indifferent' response to the arrival of Jesus.
- **I would strongly encourage you to discuss this extensively as a group**. Engage people's heart - what is their response to Christ in light of what is happening in our country? We have the second advent of Christ coming up, how do the fulfilments of prophecies that we have discussed shape how we are living today?
- I would encourage a time of reflection, confession, and prayer. Discern how you might lead through this time as it might be a tender time for your group.

3. <u>Implementation</u>

The transformation equation can simply be described as:
i) What (Information)
ii) So what? (Activation)
iii) **Now what?** (Implementation)

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