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A baby born in wicked day!

Our Foster family circle has been enlarged of late! We had wee Phebe, a first great granddaughter who arrived on April 13th, born to Lynn and Ivan Jr. and joining her little brothers, Isaac and Joel. Then on September 19th, little Katie Ann was born to Debbie and Stephen, bringing their precious 'brood' to five. Katie is our latest grandchild, number 21!

We are thankful to the Lord for such blessings as these little ones. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD," Psalm 127:3.

These arrivals reminded me of the anxious and concerned response of my mother when in the 60s and 70s and 80s, we informed her of the prospect of a new arrival in our family. "Oh," she would lament. "Such an evil world for a little one to be born into!"

Of course back then there was the ongoing daily threat of terrorism in the streets and lanes of Ulster as well as the growing apostasy in the religious realm. Great-Great-Granny Foster (as she would be now) had reasons to be concerned. What would she not think of the world now into which children are born with its ever-accelerating plunge into wickedness, almost unknown some 50 years ago?

As I thought of that, actually in the prayer meeting before the Morning service last Lord's Day, I was prompted to think of the times into which Mary brought forth her firstborn child, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was made to realise immediately that the Saviour was born into an age, that apart from the final years of this age, was likely the most wicked there has ever been!

- The Saviour was born during the reign of a murderous king who was a most impious hypocrite who feigned a desire to worship the Messiah when all he planned to do was murder Him.

"Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 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," Matthew 2:7-8. The murderous character of Herod was demonstrated in his reaction to the refusal of the Wise Men to heed his request. "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," Matthew 2:16.

- As a babe, the Lord Jesus was forced into exile and hiding because of the threat to His life.

"And when they (wise men) 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. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: 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," Matthew 2:13-15.

- Never in the history of Israel was satanic activity so rife as in the day of the Saviour.

"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them," Matthew 4:24. "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him," Mark 1:27.

- The leaders of the professing church were evil men indeed.



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"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," Matthew 3:1-8.

This is a really telling description of some of the leaders of the Jewish Church in the Saviour's day. Their wickedness was further evidenced by the Saviour's description of them. "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8:42-44.

Their animosity and wickedness toward the Son of God became ever more evident as the Saviour's three year ministry progressed. "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people," Matthew 26:3-5.

- Never has a nation so decisively rejected Christ as did Israel at the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus!

How wretched was that cry that the leaders of Israel provoked from the lips of the people at the trial of the Saviour and which led on to His crucifixion at Calvary

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified," Matthew 27:20-26.

Yet, it pleased the Lord to choose such an age into which to bring His only begotten Son.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Galatians 4:4-5.

Young parents, fear not for your children for He Who preserved His Son from the evil schemes of devils and men can and will preserve your children if you act in the spirit of those we call the 'mothers of Salem'.

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein," Luke 18:15-17.

Despite the evil strategies of the devil and his agents, God's eternal purpose will succeed. We can say and will forever say, as did the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles



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and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it," Acts 2:22.

The grand purpose of God in redemption will succeed. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand," Isaiah 53:10.

Whatever threats the faithful parent faces, I believe they will be able to say with the Paul the apostle as he quotes, in happy anticipation of the triumphant Saviour at the completion of the work given Him of the Father: "Behold I and the children which God hath given me," Hebrews 2:13.

Rest in that victory dear mother and father and commit your precious little ones to the care of God.

Ivan Foster.

24th September 2019.