

Stealth Savior

‘A Sunday school teacher began the lesson with a review of what the class had learned last week [beginning with Luke 2:1 “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed”]. The teacher asked, “Who decreed that the whole world would be taxed?” With all the disdain that one of the little boys in her class could muster, he answered, “The Democrats!”

I swear, I’m just quoting this joke as I found it. I did not make it up. But whoever did, boy, did they know what they were talking about! The King James Version renders the Greek in this verse as “taxed”, while our modern New Living Translation, as well as many others, “hides” this meaning by saying “registered”. Well, it’s truly just a matter of semantics, because the whole point of being registered is to be taxed. And it was because of this “registration”, this tax, that Joseph had to travel all the way down to Bethlehem to be “registered” and pay his per capita tax; that and his new wife’s. I don’t think they had to pay a tax on the Baby that was literally due any minute, so they “lucked out” on Him. The whole point of this, is, it was all because of Rome needing revenue, as well as updating its tax rolls, that the order came down that everyone in the empire had to drop everything and register

and pay their head tax. And that is why our Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem. How mundane is that? Why the Savior of the World could have just as easily been born in Nazareth where both Joseph and Mary lived. Wouldn't that have been a whole lot easier? Because of this stupid imperial edict, which Caesar Augustus probably hadn't even laid eyes on, as it was a bunch of bureaucrats and staffers that did all such work, yet did it with Caesar's name on it, all because of this that the Holy Family had to make the arduous trip down to Bethlehem, and just because they had no sooner arrived that the Baby decided He had to be born right then and there, out comes Baby Jesus. Born in a stable in Bethlehem of all places. The King of the Universe, the Supreme Potentate of Earth, the Savior of the Cosmos and all Mankind, was born in a stable, beside barn animals, mostly sheep, with the chill in the air kept at bay with the body heat of those very same animals, which also imparted a distinctive "aroma" to the surroundings. Even if you've never grown up on a farm with livestock as I have, and needed to clean out the barns and hen house, you can probably imagine. But in God's ancient plan, it had to be Bethlehem, the "Place of Bread", and Lord Jesus is the "Bread of Life".

What a stroke of genius! The promised Savior of the World, prophesied in Genesis 3:15 some 4,000 or so years ago, had now arrived, and in a way that those who were waiting anxiously to destroy Him had no idea. Talk about a stealth Savior! Yet at the moment of His birth, Heaven could not contain itself, and for a

brief moment, the skies opened up over the sheep folds of Bethlehem and a multitude of Heaven's angel armies appeared, praising and glorifying God. Revealing themselves as heavenly beings of light, one particular angel led them and told the terrified shepherds who'd never seen anything like it in their lives, they had nothing to fear. On the contrary, this was the most joyous moment they would ever experience in their earthly lives, for God had commanded the angel to reveal to them, before anyone else, that the Messiah, the Christ, had just been born in a stable near them in Bethlehem. Yes, in Podunk little Bethlehem. Yes, in a stable no less! With sheep. They were very familiar with sheep. They'd feel right at home going to a stable. And sign of signs, clue of clues, this Baby was going to be wrapped in the same cloths that baby lambs destined to be sacrificed for sins in the Temple were wrapped in. Furthermore, this Baby would be lying in a manger, a feeding trough. That would be the clinch. With all that data in hand, they hurried off to investigate and find this Savior of the World that Heaven's own messengers had been sent to tell them about! If a multitude of angels had told you about something this momentous, wouldn't you drop everything and go look?

Whatever the enemy of our souls was looking for, he was not expecting the One Who would crush his head to be born in a manger, and probably not even in Bethlehem. Why would Father God arrange it this way? Well, because God is smart. He's smarter than anyone else, and everyone else combined and then

infinitely smarter still. Back in Genesis 3:15, the devil heard God's pronouncement that the seed of the woman, that is, a child born from Eve's descendants, would defeat the serpent, crushing his head, for his evil-beyond-description, dastardly deed of tempting the woman who then led her husband, to rebel against God by eating the forbidden fruit, and literally ruin God's lush, perfect creation. So, though all evil knew that this day would come, when and how and the exact identity of the One Who would destroy them was unknown to them. And so it remained. Though the devil in King Herod would, yet again, try to destroy this Savior by killing all the boy babies in Bethlehem and its environs, the devil missed again. The stealth Savior escaped the devil's clutches once more.

The devil had tried to kill off the future Savior while the people were still in Egypt when all the Hebrew boy babies were ordered to be killed at birth. Moses, you recall, was miraculously saved by being placed in a basket that floated by the banks of Nile River. After others, there was the "brilliant" plan hatched through Haman in the Persian Empire that, had it been successful, would have eradicated all the Jews from the earth. Thwarted by that pesky Queen Esther! That was followed by repeated massacres of the Jews down through history, as the devil's hatred of God's Chosen People knew no bounds. The evil Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes was unable to stamp out the Jewish culture and religion. I wonder why. Another try with King Herod. Failed

again. And then with satan's inability to dispatch the stealth Savior, Who even after being crucified on the Cross, had the audacity to "impossibly" resurrect, coming back to life on the third day, defeating the spirit of death itself, satan now knew that his time was growing short. So seeking revenge, with greater rage than ever, he moved the Romans to massacre the Jews, and yet again tear down and burn that despised Temple in Jerusalem which represented God's presence on earth. But still the Jews persisted. They just would not go away! In country after country where the Jews fled, down through the centuries, pogroms and genocides killed thousands, yet all fell short of exterminating them. In Hitler, with a complacent, compromising, sleeping church as an accomplice and accessory, the Nazis came closest to the devil's goal of ridding the earth of God's Chosen People. This time, not thousands, but millions upon millions were brutally killed with all the pure hatred the devil could instill in the Nazis. But failure again!

The year 1948 arrives and Israel is reborn as a nation, in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 66:8. The next day, all the Arab nations surrounding it mobilized their armies to put a final end to the Jews. They failed. How is it even possible? The odds were totally in the Arab's favor! If it isn't obvious by now that these Jews are God's Chosen, your eyes and head need examining. Attacked again in 1956, 67, 73, 82, 2006, and now again, 2023. This time Persia is trying yet again, ahem, Iran. But, if you've got any smarts at all, we know that every attempt will fail. For we

have read the Holy Book! And we also know that those who help Israel will be blessed, and those who oppose her will be cursed.

The Stealth Savior arrived the first time about 2,026 years ago. We know that He's promised to return. And before He left, and even after, especially through the Apostle John, He gave us many details and signs of what to look for which will tell us that the time is drawing near. Folks, His signs are now surrounding us like deafening sirens and flashing lights. His return is just at the door. He's not coming in stealth this time. This time, it'll be with Heaven's trumpets blowing. What we're seeing now with this current war with Hamas, their name which is related to the ancient Persian madman Haman, is, even if it doesn't escalate, is setting the stage for the antiChrist to come on the world stage and promise to bring peace to the Middle East. Either way, things are moving into place quickly. The greatest revival in history has begun. While the greatest persecution of the Jews and their brothers the Christians, us, has also begun. Over 160 Christians were massacred by Islamist terrorists in Nigeria gathered for Christmas worship last week. Thank God we're safe so far in America. But 2024 will be a truly bumpy year. Worse than anything we've seen yet. So stay in God's will. Always seek the truth and don't be afraid to live it, even if doing so turns neighbors into enemies. Trust in God, and in the power of His might. He's promised to be with you and protect His people. Look at what He's done for the Jews. He'll do the same for us Gentile sheep as well.

