

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Bethlehem Tragedy

(Jerry Fite)

It was a horrible day when the most innocent of Bethlehem were slaughtered. Little boys two years old and under were killed on orders of an enraged and jealous king. What a horrific moment to have your infant son snatched from your arms to be thrust through with a sword! How do parents process the fact that they were not able to protect their trusting toddler from an act of evil? The moment of tragedy offered no answers, but only the sounds of grief: *“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not”* (Matthew 2:18).

Newtown, Connecticut witnessed the slaughter of innocents this past Friday. Twenty innocent children were shot to death in their elementary school by a disturbed twenty year old male. Six adults also lost their lives in responding to the determined killer, who ended the massacre by killing himself. Like the Bethlehem tragedy, the horrific moment offered no answers, but

chronicled great mourning and weeping.

How do we make sense of such horror? Does it further entrench the atheist in thinking there is no good God, since such evil was allowed to occur? If God exists, where was He? Does God offer us a healthy prospective?

God created man in innocence, but capable of choosing to do good or evil. When tempted to disobey God’s law to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of the good and evil (Genesis 2:9), man willfully disobeyed God and chose the way of evil (Genesis 3:5-6). God created man, not robots. People are free to love or hate; to do good or do evil. Evil occurs for God allows man to exercise his free will.

Evil starts from within. *“For from within, out of the heart of men evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders...all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-22). Herod was troubled over the news that a king of the Jews had been born (Matt. 2:3). When the wise men did not return

to him as requested with the time of birth and location of the new born king, he was *“exceeding wroth”* having been *“mocked”* (Matthew 2:16). Jealousy and anger proceeded from within to work its havoc on innocent lives.

We may never know a specific reason or reasons for the horrific act of the twenty year old in Newtown. But we can know assuredly that such evil began in his heart and thoughts. Evil exists within and hurts without!

Where was God? He definitely was not ignoring the Bethlehem tragedy. *“The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, Keeping watch upon the evil and the good”* (Proverbs 15:3). God instructs the wise men to not return to Herod, and warned Jesus’ parents to flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s evil plan (Matt. 2:12, 13). Amidst evil, God was working out a greater plan to save man from all sin (Matt. 1:21).

The innocent children of Bethlehem and Newtown are safe with their Creator (Matt. 18:3-4). As always, God seeks to comfort the bereaving (2 Cor. 1:3-4).