

The Threat of Death

Question:

When Jesus was an infant, Joseph was warned in a dream to leave Bethlehem and flee with his family to Egypt. This was done because Herod (the Great) was attempting to kill the Messiah. However, when an angel later told Joseph that it was safe to return to Palestine, he was told “they are dead which sought the young child’s life” (Mt. 2:20).

Who are “they”? Did more than one person attempt to have Jesus killed?

Our Answer:

The Bible doesn’t specifically identify who “they” are. However, some scholars have suggested that the angel was referring to Herod (the Great) and his son, Antipater, who according to some conspired with his father to kill Jesus. According to Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, chapters VII and VIII), Herod ordered Antipater executed and five days later died himself.