

Home for the Holidays
#5: Homeward Bound
December 30-31, 2006

¹³ When they [the Magi] had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been out-witted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ¹⁸ “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.” *Matthew 2:13-23 TNIV*

Introduction: Like our own traditions and memories surrounding the celebration of Christmas, the story of Christ’s birth is filled with references to “home.” As we view the Nativity through this lens, we can see that God always has a home for his people, for “Home is where God’s heart is.” As with Joseph, Mary, and the Christ Child, even in our perilous journeys of life we can feel at home in God’s care. Our Lord guides and provides according to His plans and purposes for our lives and for His world. And eventually, that journey takes us to our permanent home in His eternal presence.

I. God intervenes in the lives of His people.

- A. Joseph’s 4 Dreams: to take Mary as wife, to flee to Egypt, to return to Israel, to go to Galilee. (The Magi also were warned in a dream. Mt. 2:12.)
- B. The Protection of the Christ “Child and His mother”. Infant Jesus is central to the story; it’s all about Him, now about 1 year in age.
- C. The existence of evil and evil people in this world. God allows human beings to make choices, even wicked ones. King Herod and his sons—Archelaus, Antipas.
- D. The Fulfillment of Prophecies:
 - “Out of Egypt.” From Hosea (ch.11), describing the nation. In the days of famine, Jacob/Israel and his family went to Egypt under the direction of his son Joseph who had providentially

become its prime minister. Later, after generations of slavery, God brought the Israelites out of Egypt. *Jesus serves as the Antitype of Israel, representing the whole nation of God’s chosen people. As with the Israelites of old, God called His Son Jesus out of Egypt.*

- “A voice in Ramah, weeping.” In the days of Jeremiah (ch.31), the people of Israel were taken captive to Babylon, the land of present-day Iraq. In exile march as they passed by the tomb of Jacob’s wife Rachel, it was as if she cried out from the grave for her descendants, mourning for her nation that had been destroyed. *With Herod’s atrocity of murdering all boy babies in the vicinity, the prophet’s words again come true. And yet there is hope, as Jer. 31 speaks of a future restoration, the end of weeping, and a coming new covenant of God with His people. This, too, finds fulfillment in Christ.*
- “A Nazarene.” No specific reference in the prophets. *Because “Nazareth” and “Nazarene” were then terms of derision and scorn, probably this refers to the prophecies that Jesus would be disrespected and rejected, which He was.*

II. God provides for the needs of His people.

- A. Financial resources to fund their trip to Egypt came in the form of gifts from the Magi: gold, frankincense, myrrh. Not only were they symbolic gifts, but practical provisions for Joseph and Mary.
- B. Joseph’s skills as a carpenter would bring income for his family.
- C. King Herod died (4 BC) only a year or so after he ordered infant boys killed. It would be safe for Joseph to take His family home

III. God calls for the trusting obedience of His people.

- A. Each time God directed him, Joseph took immediate action. He persevered through the dangers and difficulties, and he trusted God’s instructions.
- B. God could have provided for Christ’s protection in more miraculous ways, yet He chose to use Joseph in simple obedience.

Conclusion: The same sovereign God Who intervened to fulfill His Messianic prophecies, Who protected and provided for the Christ Child, and who used simple, persevering obedience, also seeks to be active in our lives. We can trust Him and obey Him. For, as we persevere in our “journey with Christ,” the Lord reassures us of His great promise—that He is with us and is working in our lives and all around us according His good purposes. The Lord guides and provides. Indeed, He is Emmanuel, “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14; Mt. 1:23; 28:20). Our Lord is with us all through life’s journey, and He will bring us to our ultimate, eternal home in heaven with Him. Never fear. In Christ we are “homeward bound.”