

How to Handle Uncertain Times

Matthew 2:12-23

12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." 21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Mary and Joseph have had some very uncertain times. God had both revealed His plan to them in the beginning. And now these three strangers have shown up with these precious gifts. It seemed like a sign of God's abundant favor. Now they could afford some of the things they had been missing.

Joseph had left his established carpenter business back in Nazareth but they had been in Bethlehem now for almost two years since Jesus was born. Things had been really tight but now it would all be different. They could use these expensive gifts to get a better life, some better clothes. And a better diet would be useful as well.

It seemed like a dream come true. But then Joseph gets another message from God. They must leave Bethlehem and Israel and go to Egypt. Herod, who the wise men had visited is a ruthless king who has already put to death many people to keep his kingdom secure. This included several members of his own family.

And Joseph had learned long ago not to question God. So he does exactly as he was told in the dream. They arise and gather together the few things that they have and flee to Egypt.

But this brings up some unpleasant issues. If God would allow this to happen to His own Son, what should we expect? When such a great blessing could be a foreboding of such terrible danger and them having to flee for their lives, what might we expect?

There are several things in this passage that will help us answer these questions. Let us look at them.

- I. God never promises anyone a life without struggles.
 - A. Notice the promise of Jesus.
 1. John 16:33 (NKJV) 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
 - B. Notice the words of Paul
 1. 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV) 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,
 2. Romans 5:3 (NKJV) 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
 3. 2 Corinthians 1:4 (NKJV) 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
 4. 1 Thessalonians 3:4 (NKJV) 4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.
- II. God speaks to our needs through His revelation to us.
 - A. For Joseph God revealed His will in a dream.
 1. God does not operate like we do.
 - a. We would of just killed Herod.
 - b. But God knew what that might bring.
 - c. God always acts with a full omniscience.
 - B. For us God has revealed His will in His word.
 1. Those who neglect the word of God will falter in their own understanding.
 2. In His word are the ways of life.
 3. To act contrary to the word of God is to follow the ways of death.
- III. Our responsibility is to listen to God and follow His leading.
 - A. Notice the warning of Jesus
 1. Matthew 7:21-27 (NKJV) 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My

Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

2. 24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.
3. 26 But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

As we end this year and begin a new one, it would do us good to take these words into account. We have a new start this year. Let us fill up with the things that God would have us fill it up with.

For too many years our nation has been building on the sands of human understanding instead of the rock of God's revelation.

The basic principle that made this nation great have been replaced with a supposedly progressive formula. But it is not working.

We have kicked God out of almost every part of our society and many Christians only reserve what goes on in church on Sunday morning for God.

The nation that forsakes God will be forsaken by Him.

But you do not have to let that happen in your life. Renew yourself today to follow the word of God. That through prayer, seeking God in everything, you determine to follow our Lord.

Psalm 1:1-6 (NKJV) 1 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.