

Matthew 2:19-23. Joseph's Return.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

God's guidance and sovereignty are demonstrated through the life of Joseph, who was directed by dreams and ultimately led to Nazareth, where Jesus would be raised as a humble Nazarene.

Scripture: Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 3:6, Proverbs 4:19, Isaiah 30:21, Matthew 2:19

Topics: "God's Guidance", "Divine Protection"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer reflects on the important charge committed to Joseph in protecting the infant Savior and His mother, emphasizing God's guidance through dreams in times of perplexity and danger. Mortimer highlights the patience and perseverance required in seeking God's direction, noting that those who desire to act uprightly will be guided by the Lord. The sermon explores how God inflicts judgments on persecutors of His people, showcasing examples like Herod's tragic end and the sudden death of a wicked Roman Catholic bishop. Mortimer concludes by drawing parallels between Jesus' humble upbringing in Nazareth and the sinful pride that humans often struggle with.

Transcript

What an important charge was committed to Joseph! The care of the infant Savior and of his mother. How honorable was the post he occupied! He was a shield from the darts of the enemy to the blessed child. God did not leave him without assistance in performing his allotted work. Joseph knew not how to protect his little family; he knew not when dangers awaited them, or when those dangers were removed.

In this chapter, God directs Joseph three times by dreams how to act; he tells him when to depart into Egypt, when to return to Canaan, and in what city to fix his abode. Does not this kindness shown to Joseph give us reason to expect that God will direct his people now, when they are perplexed and at a loss how to act? People who desire to act right, are often in much perplexity respecting the path of duty. They know not, in some cases, what plan it would be best to pursue; whether to settle in this village or in that town; to form an friendship with this person or with another; to go, or stay, to consent or to refuse, to speak or to be silent. Though they consult the Holy Word for wisdom, yet they can gain no light upon their path; though they consult pious friends, they can get no certain advice; and though they pray to God, they seem to obtain no answer. What then are they to do? Would the Lord direct them by a dream, how happy would they be! but no such dreams as Joseph had, are given to them.

Is not the Lord, by their perplexities, teaching them patience? Is he not teaching them to persevere in prayer, and to feel more deeply their own weakness and ignorance? If they continue to look up to God,

either some circumstance shall occur that shall show them the path of duty; or God will send some messenger (though not an angel) to point it out; or He himself will in some way or other make it clear to their minds. Or if He does not make it clear before the period of decision arrives, He will show them afterwards that their steps were ordered by Him. But no such guidance shall be granted to those who are not desirous to act uprightly. "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." Prov. 4:19. This is the threatening; but the promise is, "In all your ways acknowledge him; He shall direct your paths." Prov. 3:6.

Joseph, as we have already observed, was commanded in a dream to return to his own land. The angel said, "They who sought the young child's life are dead." It seems, therefore, that someone beside Herod sought to destroy Jesus; for the angel said, "They are dead." Perhaps this other person was Herod's eldest son Antipater; for he may have desired the destruction of the infant for the same reason as his father. This Antipater died a few months before Herod, but not a natural death. His father had unjustly suspected him of plotting against his life, and had him executed. Soon afterwards the bloody tyrant himself died in the most horrible torments--his illness began about the time of the slaughter of the babies; in vain he traveled about his kingdom to obtain a cure; no earthly hand could heal him; his disease grew worse and worse, until he became intolerably loathsome to all around him, and even to himself--he expired two years after the murder of the infants, eaten by worms!

Thus God often inflicts judgments on those who persecute His people. Several persecutors have died in the manner that Herod did, and others have been cut off suddenly in God's wrath. In this sudden manner a wicked Roman Catholic bishop of England once perished. His name was Gardiner. He had sworn that he would not eat until he had heard that two pious Christians had been burned alive. When the news reached him, he sat down to dinner, and with the first mouthful he took, he expired! Surely all people must have said, "This is the finger of God." True believers are dear to God as the apple of his eye--and those who dare to hurt or mock them, are abhorred by him.

Joseph and Mary must have been rejoiced to leave Egypt, the land of idols; for if David sighed after the services of the temple when absent from them, as the deer pants after the water-brooks, surely these pious people did so also.

It appears that they intended to live near Jerusalem, probably in Bethlehem, which was only seven miles distant; but when they arrived in Canaan, they heard that the Romans had appointed a cruel son of Herod's, called Archelaus, to be governor instead of his father; therefore they were afraid to remain near him. Joseph was then directed in a dream to go to Nazareth, where they had formerly lived. God chose that his Son should be brought up there, that he might be called a Nazarene. There is no prophet who has said these very words, but several have said that Jesus would be despised. The name Nazarene was very disgraceful, because Nazareth was a very wicked city.

And did Jesus bear so despised a name? Ought we to be proud, when our great Lord was so humble? We are disposed to be ashamed of the lowliness of our family, or circumstances, or education, and we are anxious to conceal such things from the world. This pride is very sinful, and comes to us from our first parents, who wished to be as gods. But Jesus has set his people an example of suffering contempt.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net