

## Joseph's Dream

Matthew 2: 13 – 23

December 30, 2007

### Gospel Lesson

<sup>13</sup> After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up and flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to try to kill the child.” <sup>14</sup> That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, <sup>15</sup> and they stayed there until Herod’s death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my Son out of Egypt.”

<sup>16</sup> Herod was furious when he learned that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, because the wise men had told him the star first appeared to them about two years earlier. <sup>17</sup> Herod’s brutal action fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> “A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah  
weeping and mourning unrestrained.  
Rachel weeps for her children,  
refusing to be comforted - for they are dead.”

### *The Return to Nazareth*

<sup>19</sup> When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and told him, <sup>20</sup> “Get up and take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.” <sup>21</sup> So Joseph returned immediately to Israel with Jesus and his mother. <sup>22</sup> But when he learned that the new ruler was Herod’s son Archelaus, he was afraid. Then, in another dream, he was warned to go to Galilee. <sup>23</sup> So they went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets concerning the Messiah: “He will be called a Nazarene.”(1)

This is the Word of the Lord.  
Praise to You, O Christ.

The Magi, or Wise Men, the traditional name we are more familiar with, had come and gone. They had visited Mary, Joseph and Jesus, probably in a home where they settled in Bethlehem. We tend to think of the Wise Men visiting them at the stable right after Jesus was born, but they had to travel a great distance and Jesus was between one and two years of age by the time they arrived to worship and honor Him.

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1 *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

The Wise Men were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they took a different route to return home. After they left, Joseph had his second dream, his first dream was when an angel told him that Mary was with child and that he was to trust her and know that this child was the Son of God. The second dream was to warn Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and flee from Bethlehem. That it was no longer safe for them to stay there. Herod was very upset that the Wise Men had not come back to tell him where to go and praise the newborn king. Herod was afraid that this baby king was born to be an earthly ruler and would take away his kingdom. He flew into such a rage that he ordered all male babies under the age of two to be killed, thus hoping to stop this new king from taking away his kingdom.

His act actually fulfilled the prophecy told by Jeremiah “A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah – weeping and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted – for they are dead.” Can you imagine looking at a newborn baby and thinking that it was a threat to your kingdom? Herod actually even killed his own family members because he felt they were trying to take away his throne.

His actions actually fit into God’s plan. In Joseph’s dream he was told to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt. They were to stay there until it was safe for them to return. This action fulfilled what the Lord said through the prophet “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”

Instead of a picture of peace that we think of when we picture Jesus in the manger, actually all around Him was trouble, tension, fear and violence. This little tiny baby didn’t have a home and Herod was searching for Him to kill Him.

This peaceful little baby wasn’t a threat to King Herod’s throne but was a threat to everything that Herod believed in. He is also a threat to what we believe in. Once we welcome Him in, our life will never be the same again. We will see everything in a new way, be more careful with what we say and think, and think more about helping those around us. We may be surprised at what we find ourselves volunteering for, or things that we are asked to do at church or in our community. We will be asked to stretch and grow for Christ.

This is a poem I received in an email that gives us some examples of dreams and how they can effect us.

## **THE MIRACLE DREAMS**

By Susie M. Best

That night when in Judean skies  
the mystic star dispensed its light,  
a blind man moved in his sleep-  
and dreamed that He had sight.

That night when shepherds heard the song  
of hosts angelic choiring near,  
a deaf man stirred in slumber's spell-  
and dreamed that he could hear.

That night when in the cattle stall  
slept child and mother cheek by jowl,  
a cripple turned his twisted limbs-  
and dreamed that he was whole.

That night when o'er the newborn babe  
the tender Mary rose to lean,  
a loathsome leper smiled in sleep-  
and dreamed that he was clean.

That night when to a mother's breast  
the little King was held secure,  
a harlot slept in happy sleep-  
and dreamed that she was pure.

That night when in the manger lay  
the sanctified who came to save  
a man moved in the sleep of death-  
and dreamed there was no grave.

We don't always know how God is going to direct us. He may come to us in a dream. He may be that small still voice we can hear if we are quiet. He may use someone else to guide us in a new direction. We need to be open and aware of the many different avenues that God can and will use to guide us to do what He would like us to do. He sent Jesus to us to take away our sins. He also sent Jesus to us to be an example of how we are to live our lives. He didn't send Jesus as a wealthy king but a small helpless baby that was laid in a manger after He was born. He came to show us how we can make it through our trials and how to make our faith stronger.

Joseph had some dreams. His first dream was to accept that Mary was carrying God's Son, then two dreams to keep Mary and Jesus safe. Is God coming to you in your dreams? After you dream try to remember what it's about and see if God is directing you to do something for Him.

Amen.