

## A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families for the week of December 29, 2019

### **Rise & Flee**

This week, Pastor Steve Shelby preached from [Matthew 2:13-23](#).

<sup>13</sup> Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup> And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

<sup>16</sup> Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. <sup>17</sup> Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

<sup>19</sup> But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, <sup>20</sup> saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." <sup>21</sup> And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

- On December 26, a trending topic on Twitter was [#WhyImGladChristmasIsOver](#).
- Here's the point: the annual celebration of Christmas should remind us that the Incarnation of Jesus inaugurated a new reality that has changed the world, and is changing us. It changed the situation. This new reality gives us a gladness and joy that should have no end.
- And yet we must admit something: Just this week 11 Christians were martyred in Nigeria by an offshoot of Isis. As a nation we are embroiled in a political controversy. Our city has seen a lot of violence. And we have many folks here who are sick.
- Today's story illustrates in stark terms the kind of world Jesus was born into a world of jealousy, a world of hate, a world of sorrow, a world of deception, a world of anger, a world of inconvenience, a world of trouble, a world of fear. Or in other words: our world. Nevertheless, this hard and harsh sin-filled world cannot undo Christmas. And what God did in Jesus.
- Some things for us to consider in today's text.
- This should remind us of a number of Old Testament stories. As God appointed Moses to lead his people out of bondage, so He has appointed Jesus to save His people from their sins, remember His name. (Matthew 1:21)
- Just as Egypt provided relief from famine for Jacob and his sons, it provides Jesus, Mary and Joseph a haven from Herod's murderous plans. Just as Gentiles (the Wise Men) have come to worship Him, so now a Gentile country will be a temporary home for Jesus.
- Jesus in many ways is also the new Israel as He is also called out of Egypt.
- The terrible story of the destruction of the baby boys in Bethlehem.
- Matthew uses a text from Jeremiah that is actually about the exile of the people of God. Both the exile and the destruction of the boys of Bethlehem are catastrophes. However, the weeping, the grief, and death do not get the final word. Look at the whole context of Jeremiah 31. He wants us to see something about the way God is at work. Yes, Rachel weeps-- but see what God has to say about this.

"At that time, declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people."

Thus says the Lord:

"The people who survived the sword  
found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

the Lord appeared to him[a] from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Again I will build you, and you shall be built,

O virgin Israel!

Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines

and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

Again you shall plant vineyards

on the mountains of Samaria;

the planters shall plant

and shall enjoy the fruit.

For there shall be a day when watchmen will call

in the hill country of Ephraim:

'Arise, and let us go up to Zion,

to the Lord our God.'

For thus says the Lord:

"Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,

and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;

proclaim, give praise, and say,

'O Lord, save your people,

the remnant of Israel.'

Behold, I will bring them from the north country

and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,

among them the blind and the lame,

the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together;

a great company, they shall return here.

With weeping they shall come,

and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back,

I will make them walk by brooks of water,

in a straight path in which they shall not stumble,

for I am a father to Israel,

and Ephraim is my firstborn.

"Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,

and declare it in the coastlands far away;

say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him,

and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.'

For the Lord has ransomed Jacob

and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,

and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,

over the grain, the wine, and the oil,

and over the young of the flock and the herd;

their life shall be like a watered garden,

and they shall languish no more.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,

and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy;

I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance,

and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,

declares the Lord."

Thus says the Lord:

"A voice is heard in Ramah,

lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;

she refuses to be comforted for her children,

because they are no more."

Thus says the Lord:

"Keep your voice from weeping,

and your eyes from tears,

for there is a reward for your work,

declares the Lord,

and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

There is hope for your future,

declares the Lord."

- In the midst of trial there is comfort because there is a God who sees and hears and acts.
- Even our own sin or the sins of others will prevail. Neither will death.

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