

Egypt

“Places in the life of Christ”



“When they (wise men) 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.’” Matthew 2:13

We do not often think of Christ being in Egypt, but he was there at a very young age. He was born in Bethlehem, but according to Scripture was only there for a short time until after the wise men left. Then an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him that Bethlehem in Judea was not safe. He was to take Mary and Jesus and go to Egypt to flee the tyranny of Herod.

Herod had heard of the coming birth of the Messiah, and he feared for his earthly king status. When the wise men had approached him on their way to Bethlehem, he asked them to bring word so that he could go and worship this king also. But the wise men knew better and departed another way. When Herod realized they were not coming back as he had requested he demanded that all male children under the age of two in the Bethlehem area be put to death.

For a moment we need to consider Egypt and why Joseph was told to get up and flee. It could have been a tedious journey for Mary and the young baby. Egypt was out of Herod’s jurisdiction. Herod had no power there. However, it could have also been somewhat safe because both Egypt and Palestine were part of the Roman Empire.

Joseph was a very willing servant. Often we don’t think of him in that way. He had listened to an angel earlier and did not have Mary stoned when she was found with child and was not married. He had gone to Bethlehem to register for the census when Mary was expecting the child. Now an angel is telling him to get up in the middle of the night and take this young mother and her child to Egypt.

We don’t know the exact age. We don’t know how they were accepted in Egypt. We don’t know if Joseph was able to find work there. Perhaps they were welcomed by the people. Perhaps they had been told also about this new Messiah. Or, they could have been treated as immigrants. It could have been a very lonely time for the new couple and the child. We know Mary and Joseph had been told the child was the promised Messiah, but we don’t know how that was accepted by the people of Egypt or if they even

knew. Perhaps all they knew was that a couple had arrived there. They probably didn't know the reason.

We don't know how Mary was treated by the other women. Did they see someone who had given birth to the Messiah, or did they see a young woman, almost too young to have a child, who was looking for escape from the people where she had lived. Remember, according to the law, she should have been stoned.

How did they view this new child? Was he just treated like any other child? Was he treated like an immigrant that the young couple wanted to hide and give a better life than he might have had in Judea? Mary and Joseph had no family to help with the new baby.

The trip to Egypt has always been just a little side trip without much significance because we don't hear about Christ after His birth until he is twelve years old.

After a time in Egypt, an angel appeared again. This time Joseph is told to take the young child and His mother and return to Israel.

"After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 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.' So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 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, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene."

God had expected a lot from Mary and Joseph. We sometimes complain that too much is expected of us, but when we look around, we realize we are very blessed. Yes, it seems like a lot was expected of them, but they were blessed in many ways. Most important, the child that Mary had borne was not killed by the government officials, and they were in a safe place for their child. We awaken each morning to safety and a restful night's sleep. We have opportunities there for us every day if we look around. We can start with a beautiful place to live and the freedoms we enjoy. Many years ago, our ancestors set out on a boat trip to get to a place where they thought they would be safe and be able to find work and live a better life. Because they followed that feeling, we have a better life today. I don't think an angel appeared to them, but they were led and many of them knew God as their personal Savior and felt they were doing the right thing. Many died seeking that new life.

Today, there are people coming to America from other countries. We call some of them “illegal immigrants.” Were Mary, Joseph and Christ “illegal immigrants”? Were our ancestors “illegal immigrants?” Think of what the Indians must have felt. It seems that for a while, our ancestors were able to live in peace with some of the Indians and then we started taking over. This struggle is not new. It has been going on for centuries.

Many missionaries have gone to countries where they barely knew the language and certainly didn’t have the best of life to spread the Gospel. God really doesn’t expect that much of us when we realize what other people have gone through.

Prayer: God, You are awesome and we are so blessed. We just waken each morning and expect so much. Help us to realize the love You give to us each day, Your forgiveness of our sins, and Your grace that is offered to us if we just accept You as our personal Saviour. Help us to do Your will and know that one day we will be “traveling” to Your kingdom of perfect peace and we will be accepted with open arms. Amen

1. How does this story apply to us today?
2. How can we help spread the Gospel?
3. Where are we called to go?
4. On vacation, we expect to be accepted and have wonderful accommodations. Would you be willing to start out on a journey not being sure of your safety and reception by the people there?
5. How much is expected of us today?

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