

O Lord God, heavenly Father, You rescued Your Son from the evil designs of King Herod by making Him and His family to become strangers and sojourners in Egypt, and then in Galilee for our sakes: Mercifully grant that we poor sinners, who are strangers and sojourners in this perilous world, may soon be called home to our true fatherland, the kingdom of heaven, where we shall live in eternal joy and glory; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Now when [the Magi] 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." And he rose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt 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." 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. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "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." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 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." And he rose and took the Child and His mother and went to the land of Israel. 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. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene." (ESV)

In Christ Jesus, the Nazarene King of God's people, dear fellow redeemed:

You would think the rescue of baby Jesus and His family could have had Herod and his family inconvenienced. Rather, God had His holy Son run and hide through the care of His fearful and hurried earthly parents. You would think that coming back to Israel, they would not have had to return to that small lowly Nazareth, where His parents were likely held in disdain, for having a child out of wedlock. You might think the new Herod should have been taken out of the political scene to make room for the Son of God. But not so. Here is what we shall consider for our comfort and peace from this account in Jesus' infancy: **The Rescue of the Rescuer Confirms Our Need and Provision of Rescue.**

## I

What major news event in 2021 had you conclude we live in a broken world? The Pandemic? The ongoing war on terror? The various mass shootings? The Christmas parade massacre? Hurricanes? Tornadoes? Or had

you concluded the world we live in was already broken? It is, of course, and has been since the fall into sin by Adam and Eve.

God sent His Son into our broken world for the express purpose of rescuing us from it; not to fix it. Again, when God promised our first parents that the Seed of the woman was coming, it was not to repair this damaged world, but to destroy the kingdom of Satan which had seized control and corrupted it through and through. Our text certainly underscores the need for rescue in bold and vivid colors.

Having just experienced the visit of the Magi with all of its excitement and joy, Joseph receives this message from the angel in a dream: “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.” In other words: *Joseph, run and hide, so that the Christ Child is safe from the jealous murderous hatred of that figure head of a king – impotent Herod!*

God certainly would have the power to fix this world which was corrupted by our sin, but that is not His plan for us. Yet, so much of the world even today thinks that the human race is so powerful that we can fix things and create heaven on earth. Such dreamers think establishing a communist government will wipe out greed and injustice; dissolving armies and police departments will bring all violence to an end; given enough time science will eventually prevent all disease and even death itself.

The reality is the world is becoming increasingly wicked. Jesus mentions the increase of wickedness as a sign of the last days. His Apostle describes it like this: “[I]n the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.”

So nothing has improved since the days of the Bethlehem mass murderer and as noted it has only grown worse and will continue in its downward slide. Our holy Rescuer was born in this fallen broken world and He Himself needed to be rescued in His state of humiliation by the vocation of His earthly father, who took Him and His mother to a foreign land, a land that had a history of bondage for the children of Israel.

After this baby killer died, Joseph was divinely informed that he and his family could return. It would appear that he was headed back to Bethlehem, but because the next Herod with equal wickedness ruled Judea, Joseph was redirected to Nazareth in Galilee. Yet again, God wrapped in human flesh needed further rescue throughout His youth. But eventually, when the time was right for the Rescuer to rescue us through His suffering and death, He would enter Judea for His last Passover celebration.

## II

Thus, God provided our rescue from this place. The Christ Child was preserved through the earthly vocations of parents, even followers who later on intimidated Jesus' enemies to hold off until the end. Twice we are told that Jesus was targeted for execution but the time was not right. Once on the cliff outside Nazareth and again in the temple courts with stones in Jesus' enemies' hands. We are given that mysterious expression that He passed through the midst of them, untouched.

But Jesus was a marked man and eventually would be brutally treated and affixed to a cross for execution. But our rescue did not come by the will of man, rather by the will of the Father in heaven and by His Son. As Jesus would reveal to His disciples: "I lay down My life that I My take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."

Do you understand what your Lord is telling you here? He came to rescue you. He was not a hapless victim that innocently suffered and died against His will. No, He loves you with an everlasting love that caused Him to enter your brokenness to rescue you from it forever. Your sin did not stop Him. Rather it was His love for you, despite your sin, that caused Him to rescue you. Do you deserve this rescue? By no means! You deserve, just as I do, to live in perpetual eternal brokenness separated from God our Creator. Oh, that we never minimize our need for rescue nor God's gracious provision of it, so that we do not as Herod become filled with unchecked wickedness.

Paul, writing to the Romans described what happened to those who had plunged themselves into such wickedness without a care of being rescued: "God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."

I trust that you shudder hearing that description as do I, because it is only by God's grace, we recognize our desperate need of rescue and believe that God has provided that holy Rescuer in His only begotten Son. God have mercy on us all lest our sinfulness is dismissed as petty small infractions in our minds, grieving the Spirit's work in our hearts. Rather may we speak as did Paul: *"What a wretched person I am, who will rescue me from this body of death?"* Who will rescue? The rescued Rescuer Himself – Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Can you imagine the vocational crisis of the Magi, who followed the star to Jerusalem and no one knew of the birth of the King of the Jews, and when it was pointed out that they would find Him in Bethlehem, no one from Jerusalem joined them. Had they just wasted their time and efforts? But when the star took them directly to the Christ Child they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. They fell down and worshipped the Rescuer of all mankind and presented their gifts of worship. Then they snuck out of Israel by God's direction and returned to their own country with faith in this King of kings, who would rescue them from their sin, death and hell.

God the Father rescued your Rescuer from His infancy through into adulthood, so that He might be named your sin and succumb to your suffering and death. Then rising to life the rescue was secured and you stand holy in His righteousness. Now the last part of that rescue from this broken place awaits - the resurrection of your body. God provided His Son with a body like yours, and by His grace yours will be glorified like unto His. Amen.