

Sermon Reflections

War on Christmas (Part 2) Matthew 2:13-23

Summary: Worship King Jesus; do not oppose Him. God will even turn evils against Him into good for His people.

Three Evils—Overruled for Good

1. In His Flight, See His Love Set on You (vv. 13-15)

- 245 million Christians worldwide live under persecution; there are 11 martyrdoms each day. What kinds of persecution pressures do Christians face in various countries throughout the world (what are they at risk of losing)? Why is Christianity the most persecuted faith? What is different about Christians being persecuted vs. persecutions for other reasons (e.g., ethnic)? How can persecuted Christians still have comfort?
- Every plot step unfolding in Matthew's narration of Jesus's life advances God's predetermined plan; there are no setbacks, delays, or detours. What things are happening in the world and/or in your life that tempt you to forget God is working all things according to the counsel of His will? How can seeing His perfect plan unfolding in Jesus's life enable you to fight this temptation?
- Matthew 2:15 quotes from Hosea 11:1 to remind his readers that God's final promises to His people will never again be reversed. What value and pitfalls are there in reviewing Old Testament contexts for the additional instruction that New Testament writers only allude to briefly via quotations? 2 Samuel 7:12-14 provides specific description of Who this Son is, ultimately. Seeing the Father's love and plan on His Son, what comfort can we derive from His love and plan being set on His people?

2. In Our Grief, Find His Hope Brought to You (vv. 16-18)

- In verse 18 Jeremiah 31:15 is quoted, where Jeremiah is describing the loss of children. Immediately after 31:15, hope is seen in God's people returning to their land. Reading further in chapter 31, we see this is hope indeed because the covenant stipulations will always be honored by God's people as their hearts will have God's law written on them, yielding them only and always covenant blessings. If God's law is similarly written on your heart, what blessings are promised to you on which you can set your hope, and how can this give perspective to difficulties you face today? (E.g., review Revelation 21 for blessings; as well, what blessings in other passages come to mind?)
- How do you understand your being under the New Covenant while still at times experiencing your Heavenly Father's chastisement? Why does this also give you hope?

3. In His Humbling, Spot His Salvation Won for You (vv. 19-23)

- Two aspects of Jesus' identification with being a Nazarene are: 1. Nazareth's humble status, and 2. the Hebrew language background for the word "Nazareth" connoting a branch/shoot.
 - Seeing, for example, how Jesus was promoted from opposing extremes of humility to exaltation in Philippians 2 (and elsewhere in Scripture) in God's timing and way, how can we cultivate patience to await the fulfillment of the remaining promises to His people? What role does faith play in this?
 - Isaiah chapters 11 and 53 refer to the Messiah (Christ) as the branch (root, shoot, etc.), and the way that God made provision of salvation through Messiah's sacrifice is clearly explained in Isaiah 53. The immediate context of Isaiah 11 and 53 appears to refer to a salvation applicable to the people of Israel, but how is this good news extended to Gentiles (hint: see Romans 15:12)?