

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

God's Stability In An Unsettled World At Christmas

Part IV: God's Stability Amid Livelihood Unsettledness At Christmas

(Matthew 2:11-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

This Christmas Season, the livelihood welfare of many people is marked by unsettledness:

(1) The story by Tom Krisher and Josh Boak, "Salaried workers beware: GM cuts are a warning for all" (Republican-American, December 3, 2018, p. 7A) reported that "in this era of rapid and disruptive technological change, those with a college education are not necessarily insulated from the kind of layoffs factory workers know all too well," for "a transformation" is "underway in both the auto industry and the broader U. S. economy, with nearly every type of business becoming oriented toward computers, software and automation."

(2) Healthcare is another continuing livelihood concern for the nation: Matt Mackowiak's editorial, "The truth about Medicare for All" (Ibid., December 7, 2018, p. 8A) claimed: "Obamacare is in tatters . . . The cost of health care did not bend downward, as promised. The cost of insurance did not fall, and families certainly didn't save \$2,000 a year, as President Obama guaranteed." Consequently, "many Congress members . . . have endorsed the 'Medicare for All' proposal," but "(w)hen asked about how to pay for the estimated \$33 trillion price for Medicare for All, Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., said, 'you just pay it.' It doesn't seem to matter to her that \$33 trillion is equivalent to eight times the size of the current federal government." (Ibid.)

Need: *So, we ask, "This Christmas, how does God want us to respond to the livelihood unsettledness we face?!"*

- I. When king Herod sought to find and destroy Jesus, the newborn Hebrew Messiah in Bethlehem, Jesus' earthly parents Joseph and Mary along with Him faced great livelihood unsettledness, Matthew 2:13-14:**
- A. Joseph, the family's human source of earned income, faced wage-earning unsettledness, Matthew 2:13:
 - 1. He temporarily resided in Bethlehem about 90 miles south of his business and trade tools as a carpenter from Nazareth, Luke 2:1-4; Matt. 13:55. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, Map 12: The Ministry of Jesus).
 - 2. However, God's angel told him to take Mary and Jesus and flee another 250 miles further south into Egypt from Herod who would try to find and kill Jesus, Matthew 2:13. (Ibid., Map 3: The Route of the Exodus)
 - 3. God's angel also told Joseph to stay in Egypt until he brought him word again (Matthew 2:13), so Joseph was left without income and his tools of trade, and not knowing when he could return to earn a livelihood!
 - B. The flight into Egypt left the family facing significant health care risks with their costs, Matthew 2:13-14:
 - 1. Jesus was born in December 5 B. C. or January 4 B. C. (Harold W. Hoehner, Chron. Aspects of the Life of Christ, 1979, p. 27), the wettest time of the year around Bethlehem (Zon. Pict. Ency. Bible, v. Five, p. 27) when the temperature often drops to freezing and it can snow. (Ibid., v. Four, p. 580)
 - 2. When Joseph then roused Mary and her Infant son Jesus in the night to make their hurried flight out of Bethlehem, they faced exposure to cold winter weather and possibly also to rain or snow, Matt. 2:13-14.
 - 3. Besides, Mary delivered Jesus about 6 weeks before this flight, for Jesus was circumcised the 8th day after birth (Luke 2:21), Mary offered her purification sacrifice 33 days after that at the temple (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Luke 2:22; Lev. 12:1-8) and secular records show Herod died in March-April 4 B. C. after Joseph, Mary and Jesus would have been residing in Egypt (cf. Matthew 2:15,19-20). When they then fled into Egypt, Mary and Jesus were still recovering from His birth, and the trauma of the family's flight in the cold and possibly wet or snowy weather to escape a murderous king Herod would have caused their blood sugar counts to spike, weakening their immune systems and leaving them vulnerable to colds, flu and infections.
 - 4. In addition, the roads were not paved, so in the wet winter, they were muddy and difficult to travel. (Ibid., Z. P. E. B., v. Five, p. 800) Joseph's work in traveling the roads by foot [presuming Mary with Jesus rode a donkey] was thus greatly enhanced, increasing his fatigue level and further taxing his immune system.
 - C. In addition, since Mary's purification offering of two turtledoves 40 days after Jesus' birth indicates that she and Joseph were poor (Luke 2:24; Leviticus 12:1-8), they were not independently wealthy people who could afford of their own means to make a 250 mile trip into Egypt and reside there for an indefinite period of time!
- II. However, God supplied through the Magi's Matthew 2:11 gifts all the family needed for their livelihood:**
- A. We know the Magi arrived with their costly gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh *after* Mary had offered the sacrifice for her post-natal purification, for she purchased a pair of birds at the temple for her sacrifice, what Leviticus 12:8 allowed the poor to use when they could not afford a lamb, Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Luke 2:24.

- B. Joseph and Mary had thus paid their Roman government taxes and paid for Mary's purification offering out of their poverty status **before** receiving the Magis' gifts that suddenly greatly enhanced their financial welfare.
- C. Thus, the costly Matthew 2:11 gifts of the Magi equipped the family to meet their livelihood needs in making their unexpected flight into Egypt without the added burden of taxes or sacrificial dues (Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 22), and the **ways** the gifts *inherently* and *comprehensively* did so is a remarkable story in itself:
 - 1. The gold was a medium of exchange throughout the ancient world (Ibid., v. Two, p. 771-772) and a gift of gold to a king from Parthian kingmakers (Ibid., Z. P. E. B., v. Four, p. 33) would be costly, easily enabling Joseph to buy food, clothing, housing and transportation items for his family in Egypt until Herod died in March/April, 4 B. C. around two months after the family had entered Egypt, Ibid., Hoehner, p. 13, 27.
 - 2. The frankincense was an essential oil with a wide variety of uses for the health of the family in its flight:
 - a. Frankincense addresses respiratory infections, catarrh, laryngitis, fevers, urinary infections, anxiety, tension, scarring, sores and wounds. (Anne McIntyre, The Complete Woman's Herbal, 1995, p. 42)
 - b. Applied to Joseph who likely faced the greatest exposure to the cold, damp weather and fatigue as he treaded the muddy roads, the frankincense could have addressed his chest, sinus, throat and flu issues, and countered his anxiety in his struggle to get the family for whom he was responsible out of Herod's reach.
 - c. Mary may have ridden a donkey, being less exposed to the elements, but possibly needing help fighting urinary infections, scarring, sores, wounds and anxiety and tension in her post-natal condition and flight from Herod that would be aggravated by long, hard days of travel on a donkey for 250 miles into Egypt.
 - d. Six-week-old infants do not do well with exposure to powerful essential oils like frankincense and myrrh, but Mary's welfare would be necessary for Jesus, for her milk was His sole source of nourishment.
 - 3. The myrrh was another essential oil with a wide variety of uses for the health of the family in its flight:
 - a. Myrrh addresses chest infections, colds, flu, catarrh, sinusitis, sore throats, diarrhea, vaginal infections, cuts, wounds, lowered immunity and candidiasis from spiked blood sugar caused by stress, Ibid., p. 43.
 - b. Joseph's exposure to cold, wet weather and fatigue in treading the muddy roads could have left myrrh helping him overcome chest infections, colds, flu, catarrh, sinusitis, sore throats and lowered immunity due to fatigue and the stress that raised his blood sugar as he tried to get Mary and Jesus out of danger.
 - c. Mary may have benefited from the myrrh in addressing vaginal infections, cuts, wounds and lowered immunity in her post-natal condition coupled with the stress of the flight and long days on a donkey.

III. Thus, Joseph needed only to *MANAGE* the gifts from the Magi to meet his family's livelihood needs in their sojourn in Egypt, and Scripture teaches *HOW* such effective management is accomplished:

- A. Psalm 62:11-12 claims the Lord provides future financial income rewards for one who performs his livelihood work well. Joseph must have excelled in his employment back in Nazareth for God to *reward* him with significant additional income in the form of the gifts of the Magi so Joseph could support his family in Egypt.
- B. Proverbs 24:30-34 on Solomon's lesson learned from observing someone else's neglected vineyard reveals one's need to give careful, diligent attention to managing what resources he already has to avoid poverty. So, Joseph applied careful, diligent attention to managing the gifts from the Magi to support his family in Egypt.

Lesson: *When God had Joseph, Mary and Jesus make a sudden, unplanned, costly, health-risky flight into Egypt, He supplied the means to do so from the gifts of the Magi, so Joseph needed only to manage those gifts Biblically.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) If facing livelihood unsettledness, (a) may we like Joseph obey God's Biblical directives, including doing our livelihood work well, (b) trusting Him to supply added resources for our future needs, (c) and may we Biblically manage those resources He supplies for blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The Proverbs 24:30-34 lesson on managing the resources one already has to avoid poverty was reflected in remarks by Dave Ramsay and Chris Hogan on the Financial Peace University radio talk show December 14, 2018. They told of a study of 10,000 self-made millionaires who did *not* inherit wealth or attend Ivy League schools, who were *not* top scholars, who did *not* earn unusually high salaries and were of *no* particular gender, race or ethnicity. Yet, *each* had paid close, faithful attention to what he possessed to avoid debt, budget, save and invest long-term. Doing what Proverbs 24:30-34 asserts enabled each one not only to avoid poverty, but to become a millionaire!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, may we do our assigned work well to be rewarded by the Lord. If facing livelihood unsettledness, may we heed God's directives, trusting He will provide the resources we need to fulfill those assignments and carefully, faithfully, diligently manage those resources for blessing.