

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Handling Angelic Conflict Stress At Christmas, Matthew 1-2

Part III: Handling Angelic Conflict Stress On The Family

(Matthew 2:13-18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a lot of stress on the family this Christmas, much of it caused by the angelic conflict:

(1) We face it in the realm of our unborn children: In arguing for abortion rights before the Supreme Court, Reproductive Rights Litigation Director Julie Rikelman "told justices the Constitution's protection for liberty must include the right to choose abortion" or "a state could 'demand that'" a woman "'go through pregnancy and childbirth with all the physical risks and life-altering consequences that brings.'" (David G. Savage, "Court tackles abortion," Republican-American, December 2, 2021, p. 1A) In this view, unborn babies are less valuable their mother's health, and one asks if the next step will be to call for all pregnant women to abort their babies to avoid risking their health!

(2) We face it with our children: The killing of four students in a school shooting in Oxford, Michigan November 30th, what we like to think will never happen in our area, has reportedly led to a copycat incident in Watertown, Connecticut. "Local police" there on December 10th "charged two 12-year-old boys and a teenage sister for their alleged roles in two separate threats made against Swift Middle School," and "Superintendent Alison Villanueva said students and young children try to imitate what they are seeing on television or social media platforms . . ." (Hanna Snyder Gambini, "3 busted in school threats," *Ibid.*, December 11, 2021, p. 1A) To avoid future similar copycat incidents, the superintendent added, "'(W)e ask that all families please take a moment to review and filter the content their children are watching on TV,'" *Ibid.*

(3) We face it with our teens and young adults: A "new survey from MTV Entertainment Group and The Associated Press NORC Center for Public Affairs Research" found that the "stresses of the coronavirus pandemic have taken" a big toll on "teens and young adults" as "they come of age during a time of extreme turmoil." (Collin Binkley and Hannah Fingerhut, "Elevated Teen Angst," *Ibid.*, December 7, 2021, p. 1B) They've been impacted as to "education, friendships and dating," and they find it hard "to pursue . . . career goals," have "fun" and maintain their "mental health," *Ibid.* "The outsized impact on children and adolescents is partly linked to where they are in their brain development" claims Dr. Cora Breuner, a pediatrician at Seattle Children's Hospital," and "while young people are falling behind in school, they're also behind on the skills needed to cope with stress and make decisions," *Ibid.*

(4) We know that much of this stress on the family rises from the angelic conflict, for after giving admonitions on family life in Ephesians 6:1-4, the Apostle Paul asserted in Ephesians 6:11-12 that the wrestlings we face in such realms are not against people, but against wicked spirit beings. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Ephesians 6:12)

Need: *So, we ask, "How can we address stress on the family that is caused by the angelic conflict this Christmas?"*

- I. From Revelation 12:1-4, we know that the events surrounding Christ's birth in Matthew 1-2 were heavily affected by Satan's effort to try to destroy Jesus at His birth (as follows):**
 - A. The Revelation 12:1-2 "woman with child" who "travailed to give birth" is Israel who suffered to produce the "man child" (KJV), literally in the Greek N. T., "[a] son, [a] male" (*huion arsen*), Messiah Jesus in Revelation 12:5. (*Ibid.*, ftns. to Rev. 12:1 and 12:5; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 864; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 815-816; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 413, 53)
 - B. The Revelation 12:3-4 "great red dragon" who tried to kill the "child" is identified as Satan in Revelation 12:9.
- II. Matthew 2:13-18 thus reveals Satan's effort to use king Herod to kill Jesus at His birth (as follows):**
 - A. When God in a dream warned the magi not to return to Herod, He also knew Satan would cause Herod to be infuriated into killing all the young children around Bethlehem to destroy the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:12, 16).
 - B. Accordingly, when the magi left Bethlehem, God's angel warned Joseph in a dream to take Mary and Jesus and flee into Egypt to escape Herod's purge and stay there until he heard from that angel again, Matthew 2:13.
- III. Joseph's response to God's angel examples how we should handle angelic conflict stress on our families:**
 - A. Joseph heeded God's messenger in accord with a past precedent in his life, Matthew 2:13a with Matthew 1:20:
 1. Back in Matthew 1:20, God's angel had told Joseph in a dream not to fear to take Mary to be his wife that Joseph might protect the reputations of Jesus and Mary by quickly taking Mary as his wife.
 2. Thus, when God's angel appeared a second time to Joseph in Matthew 2:13a telling him to protect the Infant Jesus this time physically similar to his previous protective action performed to protect Jesus' reputation, Joseph knew he should heed the message, and he took the appropriate action, Matthew 2:13-14.

- B. Joseph heeded God's angel in providing for the Infant Jesus' sustenance, Matthew 2:13b: Joseph was to take Mary along with Jesus, for Mary as a nursing mother was needed to keep the Infant Jesus alive.
- C. Joseph fled to Egypt in accord with God's command (Matthew 2:13-14) even though Scripture at Deuteronomy 17:16 forbade Hebrews like Joseph from returning to Egypt, for that Old Testament directive was given to counter worldliness where Joseph was on an emergency run to protect Jesus. Protecting the life of our children takes precedence over God's other directives, cf. Matthew 12:1-4 with 1 Samuel 21:1-6.
- D. Joseph was directed to be attentive to God's continued leading, to remain in Egypt once he arrived there until he received word from God's angel as to where he was then to go, Matthew 2:13d.
- E. Joseph obeyed God's directive, Matthew 2:13-14.
- F. Joseph acted immediately upon being warned of God's angel, rising from sleep and taking Mary and the Infant Jesus by night to start off down the road headed for Egypt and away from king Herod, Matthew 2:14b.
- G. Joseph recognized the practical value of God's leading, for God had him remain in Egypt until Herod's death, a practical safety measure for the Infant Jesus' welfare, Matthew 2:15a.

Lesson: *When Satan tried to inflame Herod to slay all the small children in and around Bethlehem to be sure he had destroyed the Infant Hebrew Messiah, God directed Joseph to take prudent action to avoid Herod's slaughter.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) In facing angelic conflict stress on the family, may we like Joseph (a) heed God's past precedents, (b) provide for the sustenance of family members, (c) protect the lives of family members as the top priority, (d) keep paying attention to God's ongoing directives, (e) obey the Lord, (f) act immediately upon God's warnings and (g) look for God's practical guidance to alleviate stressful situations.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this sermon's lesson to the issues presented in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) On the view expressed by attorney Julie Rikelman before the Supreme Court that unborn babies are less valuable than their mothers' health, we apply the message of God's angel and Joseph's obedience to it in putting the preservation of the Infant Jesus above heeding God's Deuteronomy 17:16 call for Hebrews not to return to Egypt, Matthew 2:13-14. The Deuteronomy 17:16 prohibition dealt with returning to Egypt to indulge one's lusts in unbelief in God where Joseph's need to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt was an act to preserve the life of the newborn Jesus! Later, Christ Himself condoned David's emergency use of the shewbread that was normally a capital offense for him as a non-priest to ingest, for given the life-threatening crisis David faced, he needed the food for survival in fleeing from Saul, 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Preserving human life takes priority over God's other practical commands on living, for humans were created in God's image, so human life is to be preserved as a priority in honor of God, Genesis 9:5-6.

(2) On the issue of copycat school shooting incidents for school age children, (a) in emergencies, as we noted in "(1)" above, preserving the physical lives of the children is priority one with the Lord, so we must do what is necessary to preserve their lives in a crisis situation. (b) As for decisions parents and/or teachers need to make **before** a crisis arises, (i) we must pay attention to God's past precedents, (ii) provide sustenance for the children, (iii) keep paying heed to God's ongoing directives, (iv) obey Scripture, (v) act immediately upon receiving a warning from the Lord and (vi) look for God's practical guidance to avoid encountering stressful situations.

(3) Regarding challenges teens and young adults in our families face, all of the examples of Joseph's actions covered in this sermon should be followed as modified to be applicable to the teen or young adult in question. Yet, there is an **added** issue -- that of unusual stress teens and young adults face as applied to decision-making on critical marriage, career, education, etc. issues amid a pandemic that is **further magnified** by their still developing brains! However, this challenge can be addressed as it is for physically mature adults -- by the "parenting" of God the Holy Spirit. We explain: (a) In John 14:16-18 where Jesus spoke of sending the Holy Spirit to indwell His adult disciples, He said that He would not leave them as **orphanous**, "orphans" (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 388; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 586-587) in bringing the Holy Spirit [at the Day of Pentecost, and He now indwells every believer, cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9b]. The Holy Spirit is thus a Divine Parent for **even adult** believers, what is **especially** necessary for teens and young adults who need the Spirit's guidance given their elevated stresses and still developing brains! Relying on the Holy Spirit via Scripture equips them to navigate life's pathway well!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we handle angelic conflict stress on the family by heeding Joseph's example coupled with reliance on the parenting ministry of God the Holy Spirit.