

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

Handling Angelic Conflict Stress At Christmas, Matthew 1-2

Part IV: Handling Emergency Angelic Conflict Stress

(Matthew 2:19-23)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In our series of Christmas Season messages on angelic conflict stress, we have learned that such stress can affect marriage and family life, but we also need direction on handling such stress in **emergencies**. We illustrate:

(1) During the COVID-19 pandemic, “Dr. David Mucci . . . had been an emergency room physician for nearly 40 years when the first cases of COVID-19 began to stream into Waterbury Hospital.” (Tracy O’Shaughnessy, “Fantasy Escape,” Republican-American, December 17, 2021, p. 1B) He claimed, “‘Things that were very standard in medicine to help people hurt people with COVID. We didn’t know what drugs to give, what medicine to give, should we load them up with fluid? It was trial and error. It was scary. It was very, very stressful.’” (Ibid.)

(2) When a recent devastating tornado destroyed much of their town, Rev. Wes Fowler of the First Baptist Church of Mayfield, Kentucky rode out the storm with his family in a tunnel under the church. He and his wife “used their bodies to cover their three children in the tunnel as the ceiling shook violently,” and Rev. Fowler reported, “‘The kids were crying and I was telling them verbally, ‘We’re going to be OK. We’re going to be OK,’ . . . (b)ut in my mind I was thinking we might not be OK.’” (Holly Meyer, “In tornado’s wake, pastor, church turn to God, service,” Ibid., p. 3B) After riding out the tornado, “his family emerged to devastation stretching for blocks: Crackling power lines, piles of rubble and calls for help they couldn’t pinpoint in the darkness.” (Ibid.)

Later, the pastor’s 8-year-old daughter asked him, “‘Why would God let this happen?’” and Rev. Wes Fowler told the reporter, “‘I had to look at my little 8-year-old girl, who looks to me for answers . . . and I had to say . . . ‘I don’t know. I don’t know.’” (Ibid.)

(3) Locally, we face emergencies almost every time we drive on Interstate 84: Bill Dunn’s column, “Readers Agree: Motorists totally bonkers,” Ibid., December 10, 2021, p. 1B, told how an earlier column of his had described increased recklessness by drivers on I-84 due to the stresses of the pandemic, what had “generated a ton of passionate emails” that “all agreed” with Bill’s column. “Wendy” of “Waterbury” even alleged “she recently observed a vehicle drive right past a school bus that had its red lights flashing and children exiting the bus. And the vehicle that drove by? Another school bus!” (Ibid.)

(4) We know emergency stresses we face in relationships are affected by the angelic conflict, for after addressing interactions between masters and slaves where fear and threatening might be expressed, the Apostle Paul claimed that in such events, we do not “wrestle against flesh and blood,” that we do not struggle against other people per se, but against principalities and powers of the demonic realm, Ephesians 6:5-9, 10-12. (B. K. C., N. T., p. 643)

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God want us to handle emergency angelic conflict stress we face?!"*

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 2:19-22a thus records how Joseph's return to Israel from Egypt led him to face a stressful emergency that again threatened the life of the Infant Messiah Jesus (as follows):

- A. In time, God’s angel appeared again to Joseph in a dream telling him to return to Israel from Egypt with Jesus and His mother Mary, for those who sought the Infant Messiah’s death had themselves died, Matthew 2:19-20.
- B. Joseph obeyed the Lord’s angel, taking Jesus and Mary with him back to the land of Israel, Matthew 2:21.
- C. However, upon entering Israel along the Mediterranean coast road but before traveling inland to Judaea (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 2004, p. 153, ftn. 13), Joseph heard that Herod’s son Archelaus ruled Judaea in place of his father, what created an emergency crisis for Joseph, Matt. 2:22a:
 1. Archelaus had brutally slain many Hebrews early in his reign in his effort to quell rebellions from among the Hebrew people for atrocities committed by his late father King Herod, Ibid., p. 151-153.
 2. Joseph thus found himself in a life-threatening crisis where he had to make a big decision, and quickly:

- a. Joseph was inclined to avoid settling in Judaea lest Archelaus learn about Jesus being the Messiah from other Bethlehem residents who had heard the Bethlehem shepherds broadcast that news! (Luke 2:15-17).
- b. However, Joseph expected the Messiah to be associated with Bethlehem in accord with Micah 5:2, not Joseph's hometown of Nazareth in Galilee that then had a bad reputation among his countrymen (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to John 1:46) and would tend to make Messiah Jesus grow up to be despised!
- c. Besides all this, the trip up from Egypt to Galilee along the coast road covered about 300 miles, and Joseph and his family had already come 150 miles on that road and were weary, so he needed to settle down soon for the health of his family and to return to earning a livelihood. (The Carta Bible Atlas, 2002, Map 4: "The Fertile Crescent – Ancient Kingdoms") Joseph had to make a big decision, and fast!

III. The solution came by a final dream by which God led Joseph to settle in Nazareth, Matthew 2:22b-23:

- A. God's angel by a dream then told Joseph to return to his hometown of Nazareth, Matt. 2:22b with Luke 2:4.
- B. Joseph obeyed the Lord's angel, returning to Nazareth and settling his family there, Matthew 2:23a.
- C. [A problem exists with the Matthew 2:23b claim that Messiah would be called a "Nazarene," so we answer it:
 1. No Scripture predicts Messiah would be called a "Nazarene," what critics assert discredits the Gospel of Matthew. (Ronald B. Allen, "Does Anything Good Come from Nazareth?", Kindred Spirit, 1999, p. 3)
 2. However, excavations from Nazareth reveal a small group of Hebrews settled there around 100 B. C., giving the area their family name "Natsara," or "Branch," claiming the Messiah, the "Branch" of David from Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; 4:2; 6:13) would arise from them, Ibid. Other Hebrews mocked this claim, Ibid.
 3. Due to difficulties in translating from the Hebrew into Greek, the correct Hebrew term "Natsarene," or "Branch-Man," is misinterpreted as "Nazarene" in the English Bible (Ibid.), so Matthew was correct in claiming Jesus came from David's line in being identified as the "Natsarene" in the **Hebrew** term! (Ibid.)]

Lesson: *In facing a stressful emergency where he had to make a quick decision on where to resettle the Infant Messiah when that decision was very hard for him due to the angelic conflict, Joseph heeded God's guidance.*

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 stressful crises caused by the angelic conflict, may we like Joseph closely heed God's Biblical guidance.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Since God communicates with us today through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17), we note God's Scripture directives regarding the stressful crises mentioned in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) On the crisis the emergency room physician faced in first trying to help COVID-19 patients only to see usual medical procedures hurt them, Scripture implies that we support the immune system with natural entities: (a) In 2 Kings 10:1-7 when King Hezekiah faced a life-threatening boil infection, God called for a known natural poultice of figs to be applied to the boil. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 578-579) The Lord likely used this procedure as a means of helping the body utilize a natural substance in support of Hezekiah's immune system while God performed a miracle to heal Hezekiah. (b) After He raised a 12-year-old girl from the dead, Christ prescribed that she be given something to eat to bolster her immune system, Luke 8:40-56. (c) In our era, Vitamins D3 and C with Zinc, etc. go far in addressing newly discovered diseases by aiding the body's immune system until proven good medicines are found.

(2) As for the Kentucky pastor's inability to answer his 8-year-old daughter's question on why the tornado destroyed much of their town, Rev. 3:21 with 7:17 reveals a Mini Great-Tribulation was predicted for our era of Church History to shake up Christians who were "wretched" (living by their sin natures), "miserable" (worldly), "poor" (lacking faith in God), "blind" (insensitive to God's truth) and "naked" (leaving Biblical ministries to compromise with errant ones), cf. Rev. 3:17 (see our notes on the Laodicean Church, Rev. 3:14-22). A father can tell his child that through trials, God is trying to get us to live by the Holy Spirit's power, not our own sinful natures, not to love this world, to live by faith in God and not some other entity, to rely on the Holy Spirit to discern God's Biblical truths and to stick to God's Biblical ministry assignments instead of compromising with errant ministries.

(3) As for driving on I-84 amid other reckless drivers, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 ESV directs that we avoid reckless people, including trying to keep our distance from reckless drivers on the road! Ephesians 4:26-27 tells us to be angry at violators of driving laws, but not to harbor that anger into ourselves experiencing road rage! Ephesians 5:15 calls us to live carefully, that we then try to drive cautiously to avoid all sorts of dangers on the road!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. In emergency crises caused by the angelic conflict, may we heed Scripture above all other sources!