

God Has a Plan, and We Are Included

Saturday 12/28 at 4:00 | Sunday 12/29 at 9:00

First Sunday after Christmas – 2019

Join Us: New Year's Eve, Divine Service at 6:00

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ:

Prior to today's reading, *God the Father had planned many things; here is a short list from the Father's perspective:*

- 1) Plan: Right after the people fall into sin – *I will promise to send my Son to be their Savior!*
- 2) Plan: Since I won't send my Son for quite a while – *I will keep things on track through the Angel of the Lord!*
- 3) Plan: Hundreds of years before He is born, I will tell the people exactly where He will be born – *in Bethlehem!*
- 4) Plan: I will promise a miraculous entry of my Son into the world – *through a virgin!*
- 5) Plan: I will announce the birth of my Son – *by an angel to shepherds!*
- 6) Plan: When Jesus is 40 days old – *I will move Simeon and Anna to say amazing things about Him!*
- 7) Plan: Months after Jesus is born – *I will cause wise men to arrive in Bethlehem with special gifts for Him!*

Now, *in this sermon*, let us understand **◆**how God's plan continues, **◆**how it fulfills several prophecies, and **◆**how it is for our eternal benefit!

1. **Plan – Protect Jesus:** ¹³ **Now when they** *[the wise men, who brought the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh]* **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.” // Earlier, Herod had tried to get the wise men to help him locate the child – *so that he could destroy Him!* We know that Jesus was *born to die*, but it was not yet His time to die, *so the Father protected His Son!*¹ What are your issues? Is the time now or later?



2. **Plan – Get Jesus to Egypt:** ¹⁴ **And he [Joseph] rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt** ¹⁵ **and remained there until the death of Herod [aka Herod the Great]. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [as recorded in Hosea 11:1], “Out of Egypt I called my son.”** // The Father had His plan; then Joseph – *without hesitation, and with the gifts from the wise men* – obeyed and went. He had to travel south at least 40 miles to get out of Judea – *the jurisdiction of Herod* – and into the territory of Egypt. What is God nudging you to do? Are you being obedient like Joseph?
3. **Plan – Fulfill Every Prophecy:** God has made thousands of promises, yet *He will and He must fulfill every single one!*
 - a. ¹⁶ **Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked [made a fool of] by the wise men, became furious, and**

¹ <https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/the-journeys-of-mary-and-joseph.html>

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. // Since Herod felt threatened by the New Born King, *and since the wise men had left without reporting back to Herod*, his fear and anger led him to order the killing. At that time Jesus was spared, but later He would die for all sinners – *young ones, old ones, and even ones like Herod, even like you and me!*

- b. **¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah [in 31:15]: ¹⁸ “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.”** // An explanation: “Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, died in childbirth and was buried in Ramah... (Gn 35:16–20). Years later, Jeremiah pictured Rachel weeping for the Israelites who were exiled to Babylon. Those OT stories of suffering anticipated the suffering caused by Herod” (TLSB, 1580). Sometimes a prophecy fits hand-in-glove... like, “**I thirst**”; other times we need God, *or people like Dr. Giessler*, to help us see the connections between prophecy and fulfillment.

4. **Plan – Get Jesus Back to Israel: ¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ 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.”** // God’s actions are not random, *He always has a plan!* God never tries things out to see if they will work; instead, *His plans always succeed!* As God used Joseph to get Jesus out of harms way and into Egypt, *so He told Joseph that the threat was over and to return.*
Is God nudging you to go somewhere, say/do something?

5. **Plan – Get Jesus to Nazareth:**

- a. ²¹ **And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.** ²² **But when he heard that Archelaus [the most evil of Herod’s living sons] 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.** // When Herod the Great died, his territory was divided among his three living sons; Archelaus was given Judea, *the territory where Jerusalem was located*; Herod Antipas was given Galilee, *the territory where Nazareth is located* (there was also his son Philip, and other territories not noted above).
- b. ²³ **And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.** // There are 16 times in the NT when Jesus is referred to as “Jesus of Nazareth,” yet *He was really from Bethlehem!* On one occasion, someone said of Jesus, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem...?” (Jn. 7:41-42 ESV). Maybe that was God’s way of withholding Jesus’ identity – *at that time.*

Conclusion: God also has plans for your life and mine – and His plans are best, *so let us know them and gladly follow!*

This Week’s Challenge: *Let us express our thanks to God for His love, plan, provision, protection, and salvation!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, as Your plans have included us, *so help our plans to always include You!*

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