

Sunday Evening 6th January 2013- Jack McHugh, Matthew 2:19-23 "The return from Egypt"



Jack was reminded of the four stages of life the caterpillar goes through - egg, larva, pupa and then butterfly. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us "For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven". As human beings we often want to skip ahead to an advanced step in our life's journey but there are risks associated with jumping ahead before we are matured and ready.

In this passage we are reminded that God has a plan and a process that is in train in the life of Jesus and his earthly family. From the very conception of this baby the world has rejected him. We even see a king, Herod, feeling so threatened by the birth of the child that he tries to murder him and murders so many other children in the process. For every move in God's plan it seems Satan attempts some counter-move. God allows Satan to exist but Jesus is not his victim and in time it is Herod who meets with a horrible death.

Now that those who plotted the child's death are dead, Joseph is again instructed in a dream to bring Jesus from Egypt back to Israel – from 'the land of sin' to 'the land of promise'. We see that the obedience of Joseph and Mary is rewarded by God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises to them. Originally Nazarenes themselves, Joseph and Mary are told to go back to Nazareth and this is where Jesus will live, grow and develop until he reaches 30 years of age and is ready to undertake his short, but world-changing ministry. From this inauspicious location the Saviour of the world will come forth and preach the Good News for everyone.

It is important that we never forget that Jesus will return in glory - that is his promise and we know he keeps his promises. Some Christian communities use the greeting 'maranatha' as a continual reminder of the Second Coming. Jesus' return will bring judgment on all of us. If our sinful world does not alter course people will experience a disaster worse than any physical disaster they have ever seen.

For those who believe in Jesus and follow his ways the rewards are total. Faith in Jesus can enable us to achieve amazing feats in his name. Christ's obedience of and dependence on the Father enabled him to prevail and secure victory on the Cross of Calvary. As we embark on a new year let us all resolve to know him more and follow him more closely.

Jesus was perfect and he draws people to himself because of his perfection. Mercifully, people's salvation hangs on valuing what Jesus did not on the actions of his imperfect followers. Jesus did many amazing things when he was on earth but the most amazing was that he laid down his life for our salvation. We are each invited to accept or reject him. If we accept him we must also share him with the world and make disciples of others.

Our world remains imperfect but Perfection will return. Jesus will come a second time and gather his church to himself. Maranatha!