

A Long Winter Ahead

*“Get up,” he said,
“take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.”*

Luke 2:13 (NIV)

Christmas is a time of celebration, colorful lights, festive food, seasonal songs, family and friends. Then comes the long, dark, cold Canadian winter! For many people this is the hardest time of the year.

In the time of Jesus we read about the hardship of His parents in the first few years following His birth. The problems that followed Jesus' birth arrived when the Magi made inquiry in Jerusalem concerning the whereabouts of the One born king of the Jews. Mad King Herod, who was always afraid that someone was trying to depose him, was the Roman ruler in the area at the time.

I say “mad” King Herod because his rule was outwardly conducted in a most skillful manner, but the house of Herod was haunted by the ghosts of family members murdered on his order because he imagined they were after his throne. Those murdered included his favourite wife,

Mariamne, and several sons. His insane jealousy for his position led him to be suspicious of anyone close to him.

When the Magi came to Jerusalem, Herod was more than interested in hearing their story about a baby who was recently born to be king of the Jews. He urged them to go find the child and report back to him so he could come and worship him as well, but his real plan was to murder the child.

God warned the Magi in a dream not to report back to Herod. So when Herod realized the Magi had gone home without disclosing the child's location he sent soldiers to kill all the male children two years old and younger. This was to ensure that he had murdered the one who might rise to take his throne from him. This is where our verse today comes into the drama. God protected the child Jesus from Herod's sword by telling Joseph to take the child and Mary immedi-

ately away to Egypt.

So there was inconvenience and hardship for the young family shortly after Jesus was born. Yet it is to be seen that no one, not even a powerful king can cause the death to God's Chosen One prior to God's appointed time. Jesus would die at the hand of a Roman governor some 30 years later. So it is with us. We will live through the coldest of the winters of life until God's appointed time for us to depart. Disease, accident or other tragedy will not take us from this world until then.

Whatever long dark winter of life lies ahead of you, rest in the knowledge that God's timing for your departure will prevail. Nothing, and no one will overcome the sovereign purpose of God for your life. Enter the New Year living each day in the confidence that our God reigns.

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