

LIFE'S DETOURS

Upon the death of Herod (at the Lord's direction), evidently Joseph planned on going back to the Bethlehem area in Judea, but when he got back in Israel, he found out that Archelaus (the son of Herod) was now ruling over Judea. And this rightfully made him afraid.

Matthew 2:22 (NKJV)

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.

Upon Herod's death, Caesar Augustus broke Herod the Great's domain up into three separate regions and gave three of Herod's sons ruling authority over them. Archelaus now ruled over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee and Perea; and Herod Philip ruled over the area northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Archelaus had the same ruthless tendencies as his father. He basically picked up where his vicious father left off. He ruled for about 9 years from 4 BC to AD 6.

One of the first acts of Archelaus was to put to death 3000 Jews in the temple because some among them were demanding that those who had committed atrocities under Herod the Great be punished. Therefore, the Jews hated and feared him.

The reign of Archelaus was marked by brutality, immorality, and tyranny. Things got so bad that the Jews and Samaritans sent an official delegation to Rome to complain to Caesar. Augustus then summoned Archelaus to Rome and removed him out of fear of a revolution from the people. Caesar proceeded to banish Archelaus without government funds to the region of Gaul. Without a support structure, he died shortly thereafter in AD 6.

Upon arriving back in the land of Israel and being fearful of returning to Judea because of Archelaus, God then warned Joseph in a dream and redirected his direction to go into the region of Galilee.

This is the fourth of Joseph's four revelatory dreams given in Matt. 1 and 2 (cf. 1:20; 2:13, 19, 22).

Note how God worked step by step in this whole process. He didn't show Joseph everything all at once, but rather led him one step at a time. Here is another good life lesson. This is how God often leads us – one step at a time – and often there are detours. We see that He often redirects us on the way in keeping with His own sovereign purposes. Then, too, note that He often uses circumstances to direct us.

How God directed Joseph...

To flee to Egypt – Matt. 2:13

To Return to the land of Israel – Matt. 2:20

To the region of Galilee – Matt. 2:22

To the town of Nazareth – Matt. 2:23

God used a mixture of things in getting Joseph where He wanted the family to be. There was supernatural revelation by way of dreams; there were circumstances that made Joseph afraid; and evidently common-sense reasoning, as Joseph was not specifically told to go to Nazareth (at least as far as we are told). And yet it made sense because both Joseph and Mary hailed from this area (cf. Lk. 1:26; 2:39).

God is sovereign, and through a multitude of variables, He has His ways of getting us where He wants us to be.

Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV)

9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 20:24 (NKJV)

24 A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way?

We don't know the way, but our GOOD Shepherd leads us along one step at a time in keeping with His sovereign purposes.