

Battleground: Nativity

The War on Christmas and the Full Armor of God

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 3: FALL OUT! 11.26.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TW @ERICTHESTORY

YOUR MISSION

1. To forget everything you thought you knew about the Christmas story - all the sappy, sentimental fluff - and to revisit the biblical Christmas narrative with a fresh perspective.
2. To deepen your understanding of spiritual warfare by familiarizing yourself with the Enemy's tactics against you and taking stock of the spiritual weapons God has put at your disposal.
3. To better prepare you for the spiritual battles you're facing.

ON YOUR FEET, SOLDIER

The man who runs away may fight again.

- Demosthenes, when asked why he fled from the Battle of Chaeronea, 338 BC

Winning a war means knowing when to fight and when to run. From the moment they received their mission, Joseph and Mary were on the run to protect their son - the Messiah - from Satan's attacks. Mary ran for nine days from Nazareth to Elizabeth, and then another nine days back to Nazareth. Joseph and Mary ran 80 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem at the time of the census. After the child was born, they ran at least 40 miles from Bethlehem into Egyptian territory, and after a few years abroad, they ran back to Nazareth, which was at least a 120-mile journey. With God on their side, why did the holy family need to run? Because sometimes it's better to flee the darkness and survive until you're ready to fight.

FUBAR

After spending three months with Elizabeth, Mary returns home to Nazareth to face her parents, her religious community, and her fiancé, Joseph, who after changing his mind has decided to stick it out with Mary (even though the baby isn't his). Still, their life together is a mess, and they're forced to make some hard decisions.

KEY TEXT: LUKE 2:1-5

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Why do you suppose Mary went to Bethlehem with Joseph, even though she was very pregnant and women were not required to report for the census (only men were counted)? Given that Nazareth was Mary's hometown, where all her family and friends lived, why would she subject herself to such a dangerous, difficult, 80-mile journey to Bethlehem?

ON THE DOUBLE

After fleeing to Bethlehem together, Mary and Joseph most likely settled into the home of Joseph's family (not a barn or outdoor stable), and when Mary went into labor, she went into the lower level of the house (or cave,

really) where the animals were kept. That's where Jesus was born.

KEY TEXT: LUKE 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

What do the (real) circumstances of Jesus' birth tell you about Mary and Joseph?

HURRY UP AND WAIT

Life didn't get any easier once the baby was born. Before Jesus' second birthday, the ruling king in the region (Herod) heard about the birth of some "new king," and he didn't like it.

KEY TEXT: MATTHEW 2:13-15

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod.

What does this passage tell you about the gravity of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ?

Can you think of any other real-life examples of what happens when forces of darkness or evil feel threatened by forces of light or goodness?

Once again, Joseph and Mary choose to flee instead of fight. For them, the choice may have been obvious (cuz, you know, the angel told them to), but what about for us? How do you think we can know when to stand and fight, or when to flee and survive?

Even Jesus ran from his enemies on occasion. Read JOHN 10:22-42 carefully. Why do you think Jesus ran in this instance?

AT EASE

Sometimes God calls us to flee for the sake of our own survival, or for the sake of peace.

KEY TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-15

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

What battles are you facing that you simply don't need to be fighting right now? How would walking away from that fight change your life?

What darkness is defeating you right now? How can you flee that battle until a more opportune time arises?