

## The Gospel According To

# **Matthew**

## **Lesson #2 – Ch.2**

### **The wise men visit Jesus – Ch.2:1-12**

### **Joseph and his family flee to Egypt – Ch.2:13-15**

### **King Herod orders the “Massacre of the Innocents”– Ch.2:16-23**

In Matthew Chapter 2, Matthew continues to establish Jesus' right to Kingship. There are about 330 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament predicting the coming of Christ the King. Here in chapter two, we will discover four of those that are fulfilled in the birth and life of Jesus Christ. All four have to do with locations: where Jesus was born, the place Jesus fled from King Herod, a town where there would be bitter weeping and wailing from the deaths of precious babies and, last of all, a little unfamiliar place called Nazareth, the little town where Jesus would live out His life. All four prophetic locations are key in the identity of the Messiah. In this one chapter, four of the 330 prophecies will be fulfilled concerning the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Oh! Our Lord **is** certainly who HE claims to be!

### **Let's begin:**

Pray this prayer with me...

“Lord, open my spiritual eyes and help me to focus on Your eternal truths today. They are most significant. Help me I ready myself to read Your Word. May all of life's demands fade away at this moment as I devote myself to hear Your voice and feed from the table of Your Word. I want to see more than historical facts through the study this week. I want You to show me Your Lordship and Your superiority here on earth. I want to develop a greater PASSION for the things of God and the ones You love.

I am all ears, Lord – speak now! Your servant is listening. In Your sweet name... Ame

### **“God's Word feeds you and then makes you hungry!**

My prayer is that you would grow a deep interest in studying God's Word and find parts of the character of our Savior in this study and appreciate Him even more!

### **➔ Read Matthew Ch.2:1-12 – “The wise men visit Jesus.”**

1. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. I have given you a map of the Holy Land. Locate Bethlehem in Judea and write next to it, “*The place where Jesus was born*” so you can picture the location in your mind. If you were to travel to Bethlehem today, you would find it on the Gaza Strip close to Tel Aviv.

2. In that day Judea was still under Roman occupation. Julius Caesar had appointed Antipator as governor of Judea, and then Antipator in turn had his son, Herod, appointed as the “prefect” of Galilee. Herod became known as “Herod the Great” or “King Herod.” King Herod was a brutal, tyrannical king. He was a very jealous and suspicious man. He came to love the power that came with his title and would do whatever it took to keep his powerful position. Kings were regarded as divine beings at that time; they were commonly worshipped like gods. Herod would defend his position at any costs. It meant everything to him. As we will discover, the thought of a new king honing in on his territory would push him to extreme measures to defend his kingdom.

**Jealousy** is a wicked taskmaster. It can push people into doing the most perverse things. It can lead us to act out in ways that we don’t even recognize as coming from ourselves. Jealousy and envy breed hatred and disunity. The four in unison are a time-bomb waiting to explode and, when they do, emotions explode, spewing shrapnel hitting all those connected to the community of relationship represented. Jealousy is a very powerful emotion.

There is no room for jealousy and envy to remain in a heart that is actively pursuing God. A jealous spirit just stinks up the place, doesn’t it? It can push a person to do the unthinkable. Most murders committed have jealousy at the root of the motivation for the crime.

Jealousy can cause even the ordinarily mild-tempered man to act out in ways contrary to his behavior. You might be able to relate if it has happened to you. Cutting words may spew out of your mouth in a tense moment you never could imagine hearing yourself say. People may bother you for no reason, and then, with godly reflection, the Holy Spirit reveals it’s a jealous spirit inside you that is causing the issue. You know the problem is not them personally; it’s just because they have been blessed with something you have longed for, and not yet gotten. You just hate yourself for being so petty, don’t you? Shame rushes in and makes you feel like a selfish child. This cycle can be unbearable until God removes the consuming fire of jealousy and envy out of your heart!

Herod was controlled by jealousy, envy and greed. It eventually drove him to commit many heinous acts. The historian Josephus records Herod as a ruthless murderer. Josephus records that Herod murdered 3 of his sons, along with his mother-in-law and his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife. If you crossed him or were looked at as suspicious of being disloyal, you paid with your life.

a. Write out the verse found in Proverbs 14:30. Circle the word that you see that denotes the decay of growth.

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♥ ***You cannot grow in the Lord and nurture a jealous spirit simultaneously.***

b. See Song of Solomon 8:6. What other descriptive words are found here to describe jealousy?

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c. Jealousy and envy are kissing cousins. They are both listed in the list of “Works of the Flesh” found in Galatians 5:19-21. Scripture is so bold to say that those who habitually live in that sin will not inherit the Kingdom of God. We know that there is only one sin that is unpardonable – that is denying Jesus until your death - but a true believer will be convicted of those feelings and come to God to repent and be made clean. He/She will desire to shake free from the carnality and destruction those fleshy attitudes bring. Read through Galatians 5:19-21. What actions do you see coming from King Herod that are mentioned in this list? Did jealousy and envy drive Herod there?

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As another example:

What horrific action did Joseph’s brothers do that was driven by jealousy?

See Gen. 37:11; 20

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d. Envy is a sign of a carnal Christian. What other detriment to the church does envy & carnality bring? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

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One’s flesh is on display when we see gossip, strife, tempers flaring, hatred, bitterness and resentment. These are often exposed, leaving them in plain sight, but there are some fleshy attitudes that we can keep hidden which are just as destructive like jealousy and envy.

There was a season in my life that I went through a period of discontentment because I wasn’t happy with where I was living at the time. After some time passed, all I could think about was moving. I wanted to move so badly and God wasn’t opening the doors for that to happen. Consequently every one that I compared my life to seemed to have it better than I did. Of course I chose to look at those who owned much more; they were a step up financially and lived in the communities I wished for. I didn’t compare myself to those women who lived in those grass huts in Africa! My eyes and heart soon became completely *filled* with envy and jealousy. I was consumed with MYSELF...I knew it...I had witnessed my own reactions internally as someone I knew would get a new home or something nicer than what I thought I had. I would inwardly resent it, although outwardly I would display all the right reactions. I hated that about myself but I didn’t know how to change it. I eventually threw my hands up in confession, expressing to God my inability to change myself, and that was the beginning of the work God would do in me.

It took God about two years to convert my soul in that area of contentment. It was a work He had to do and it was long and painful and sometimes repetitive, but He freed me from the cancer of envy and discontentment that wanted to consume my soul. If this is an issue in your life, He can do that for you too. It doesn’t have to be about a location or a house; it can be about a marriage you feel stuck in or children you are disappointed with, or a body you desperately wish you could change, or a whole list of other things!

The source isn't the issue; it's a discontented heart that God wants to change. I will share with you in the teaching this week some principles and techniques I learned that may help you have victory in this area!

We are now going to meet two other people groups in this story besides King Herod. We will meet the wise men and the chief priests and scribes. Each one has a different **response** to the birth of the King.

2. In Matthew 2:1-2, the wise men (Scripture doesn't say there were three) come from the East to Jerusalem asking others, "Where is the King of the Jews?" They had seen a "star" in the East and wanted to come and worship Him (v.2). The wise men from the East were also known as Magi. Magi were skilled in astronomy and astrology, which in those days were closely related. Some scholars believe there may have been hundreds of wise men following the star. This may be why Herod was so disturbed. Despite their paganism and occult practices, they had genuine hearts that sought the Lord. There had been talk for some time in their region that a new king would soon arise in the area of Judea. They were looking for a new world leader! They were aware of the rumors that the God of Israel would one day raise up a King for Israel.

a. How much information or proof did the Magi have that a King had been born?

See Matthew 2:2 \_\_\_\_\_

I wonder if they were just hangin' out, doing what they always did, looking to the heavens for signs and wonders to follow, and... **boom!** Something very extraordinary catches their eye! This was no common light or star or brilliant planet; this was something they had never seen before! Something cosmic, something beyond what the universe could perform alone. When God does something BIG, something supernatural, you don't have to guess whether it was of God; it's so unordinary, you just know it. Many don't believe it was a "star" at all, or even two stars colliding. One reason is that in Matthew 2:9 it says that the star "stood over" the place where the young child was. It wasn't described as a collision, but a presence. Let's take just a minute and see what other kind of light "stood over" God's people historically.

a. How did God previously use this divine light to protect Israel from the Egyptians? See the story in Exodus 14:13-20, look carefully at v.20.

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b. How did the brilliance of the light of the Lord change Moses physically? See Exodus 24:17-18 and Exodus 34:30. \_\_\_\_\_

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c. How did Paul respond to the "light from heaven"? Acts 9:3 and Acts 26:13

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d. What does Jesus call Himself in Revelation 22:16? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Maybe the light the Magi saw coming from heaven wasn't a star at all, maybe it was the "light of the glory of the Lord," like we have seen so many times before in Scripture. No one can say for sure, but it was enough to get those Magi to *move it* and follow its brilliance to its destination! Remember Daniel, God's man favored in the lion's den? He was from the countries in the East. Maybe they had heard just enough from believers like Daniel to be seekers. They had just enough knowledge to know that there was a King under that supernatural light somewhere, and they responded to the little knowledge they had to seek a Savior they didn't know.

Some of us have more knowledge of His truth than others. Many of you have been blessed with a rich Christian heritage, taught God's values since the time you were a wee little one! Others have come out of religious cults full of false doctrine and are still sorting out truth from error. Still others had no religious training at all. Wherever you find yourself on the scale, we are all responsible for what we know!

3. What does Jesus tell us is required of him or her that is given much? Luke 12:48?  
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***The CEV version says it like this:***

***"If God has been generous with you, He will expect you to serve Him well. But if He has been more than generous, He will expect you to serve Him even better." Luke 12:48***

Do you have a bible or two or three in your home? How about access to Christian T.V. and radio? I KNOW you have access to this Bible Study and go to good churches that teach God's Word every Sunday. I also know you have the freedom to worship God anywhere and at any time if you live in the good ol' USA! To those whom God gives special knowledge and special opportunities must also realize they have greater responsibilities. You and I fall under that category. If Christian leaders have received power from God and from men, they are accountable for that power.

a. Do you feel the Lord requiring more of you these days? Is He asking you to serve Him even with your busy schedule, and you're already tired? Is He drawing you into more time in study and prayer? Do you feel Him prompting you to be more consistent with your giving? In what way is He requiring much from your life? Share with your group.

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When we live out there on the edge where God is calling us to come, we see the hand of God move in our lives and the lives God touches through our small acts of obedience, and our walks with God catch on fire with enthusiasm for the things of God.

♥ **Charles Wesley said, “Catch on fire with enthusiasm and people will come from miles to watch you burn.”**

b. What hinders you from going deeper with God?

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c. Why does the truth of God become hindered in our lives at times? Hebrews 4:2

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According to Matthew 2:2, the Magi ACTED UPON the little knowledge that they had: a light or star that they had seen while gazing in the heavens, and a few obscure rumors from believers that, according to the laws of Moses, there would one day come a King to the people of Israel. This was enough to cause them to leave their own country and all that was comfortable and familiar to seek the Savior!

Now, King Herod had a much different response to the news that “The King of the Jews” had arrived somewhere on planet earth.

4. What was King Herod’s response according to Matthew 2:3?

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5. Who else was troubled with him? V.3 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Why do you think King Herod was so disturbed by this news? See hint is v.13

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Herod was a hostile man prone to jealousy. Accepting Jesus’ lordship might mean losing power and position to this power-driven king. Herod was a man who liked to do what he liked to do. He wanted no authority over his life but his own. He viewed Christ as one who would interfere with his life, and he was quite happy with how things were when he had full control, thank you very much!

This can be the exact same response people have today as they are presented with the gospel of Christ. They view Jesus as one who would interfere with their lifestyle choices, their desires, with their finances, etc. They think that living for Christ would mean giving Him all their money, giving up all the things they like to drink, sentenced to never having a good time, and living a life of boredom. They like their lives just the way they are, thank you very much, even though most of them are starved for peace, desperate for real love and acceptance, and they go

to bed every night wondering if this is all there is to this life. They still would rather believe they are in control and hold to that control. They are blind to the fact that they are dying in their sins, in desperate need of a Savior, unforgiven, and will stand accountable to a holy God one day! Peace and freedom lie alone in Jesus.

This is not only the response of the *unbeliever*; it can be *our response as believers* as Christ calls us into a deeper relationship with Him. When God calls us to let go of a desire or a dream, or calls us to go deeper with Him, we may resist and hold on white-knuckled with everything we've got, hoping we will be able to outlast God. We wrestle and roll around on the carpet of faith with our Savior believing that the thing He has called us to let go of is better for us than what He has purposed and destined around the next corner, if we would just surrender that thing to Him.

I'll admit I've wrestled; I've wrestled hard at times, with everything I've had! I've wrestled for months and months until finally in my spiritually/ emotionally/ and even physically weakened state, I gave up. I cried "uncle" to almighty God, and He instantly lifted me up in His arms of assurance and flooded my soul with peace! Oh, how I love that peace - that unmistakable peace that comes with full surrender. Freedom. I love it...love it...love it!

**♥ *There is no limit to what God can do through one life that is totally surrendered to Him! Peace lies in surrender, and in living this way, you will find your heart to remain quite calm!***

King Herod set himself against Christ, God's anointed. Now Herod understood that Jesus was the Christ because he called Him that there in v.4. It is not a good thing to set yourself in opposition to a holy God like King Herod did.

**Those who set themselves against God are doomed.**

**One of my favorite quotes - "If you can't be a good example, then you'll be a "horrible warning"!"**

"Oh Lord! Please help me be a light for you!" "Make my life a good representation of who you are!"

7. Who does the prophet warn in Isaiah 30:1-5 and what are they in the habit of doing? Where do they put their trust?

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8. God didn't mess around with Israel's disobedience to Him. According to God, the people of Israel were a stiff-necked people group. What did he warn them of in Leviticus 26:27-28?

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9. Herod was a man who walked according to his own fleshly desires. He did whatever pleased him at the moment. How does Paul describe the life that is all about pleasing self and not pleasing God in Romans 8:4-8?

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10. Who did the King summon together to get information about where the Christ was to be born in Matthew 2:4? \_\_\_\_\_

The Chief Priests and Scribes were the ones most familiar with the law. It was their job to be familiar with Old Testament prophecy and the laws of Moses, so King Herod summons them in front of him and demands to know *where*, according to the Scriptures, Jesus is to be born.

In Matthew 2:5-6 we come to the response of the coming Messiah from the Scribes and Chief Priests.

11. In reading v.5, how can we determine that the Scribes and Chief Priests knew God's Word?

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They were quoting prophecy spoken from the prophet Micah in Micah 5:2. This is the first "location prophecy" that Jesus would fulfill through the place of his birth, Bethlehem (read Micah 5:2).

12. As far as you can determine through Scripture, did the Chief Priests and Scribes ever try to find the Christ child, even though they believed what Scripture foretold to be true?

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The religious leaders were indifferent to the coming of the Messiah. Maybe they were engrossed with the goings on in the temple. Undoubtedly they had much work to do keeping the temple clean and setting up sacrifices to God. Much of their time was spent in discussing doctrine and defending legalism. They only had an *academic interest* in God; otherwise, they would have joined the Magi with an all-out passion and enthusiasm as they raced to find where their King had been born! They were religious bigots, sinful men trying to impress God with their works. They had a type of faith, but it was only head knowledge and not a heart of passion to be like Christ...to think like Christ thinks...to be about what He is about. There is such a difference!

Sad to say, many of our congregations are full of believers like the Chief Priests and Scribes. They spend a great portion their time doing religious rituals. They may have an academic interest in Jesus, but that's all. They are missing out on the personal relationship with the Savior, which is the whole point!

**Pray this prayer with me today:**

“Oh Lord, if my fire for the lost has grown cold...if I don't seek You any longer in my day with tenacity and fervor...if I've quit looking for you in the smallest details life...if I take every good thing in my life for granted and beyond that, complain that I don't have enough...forgive me, Lord, and set my eyes back on My Savior. Light a fire in my heart for the things of God, eternal things that matter and help me turn away from the religious, pious actions that I think make me right with You, or more esteemed in the eyes of others. I want to be a real Christian, Lord; not someone that acts like they care, but someone who *really* cares. I want to be burdened with those that I know are lost, condemned to hell, burdened enough that I *ache* for them when I see them in their sin. Help me to care for the “dead men/women walking”. Give me a passion that flows from the heart of Jesus for the welfare of others.”

Whew! That always feels good, to confess my staleness or lack of zeal for Christ and ask Him to fill me anew! I know He will, for me and for you! Now...let's go on!

**➡ Return to Matthew 2:7-8.**

Herod wants to know WHEN Christ the King is coming. He says it's because he wants to join the Magi and worship the new King, but we know by reading Scripture that he wanted Christ destroyed and needed to find out when He would arrive in the region in order to do something about it.

14. When the wise men saw that star once again, they must have been so relieved. I'm sure it was a sign of confirmation that they didn't leave their homes and all they loved for nothing. They must have had doubts as time had passed, and maybe they even questioned Herod's loyalty at this point. Seeing the star, God was confirming that they were doing the right thing! When they saw the great light (glory of the Lord or light of Christ) what was their reaction (v.10-11)?

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Their gifts were an expression of their worship, given out of their hearts filled with adoration, appreciation and gratefulness.

**♥ Giving apart from gratefulness is empty giving.**

These wise men opened their “treasures” to God and gave graciously to Him.

True worship always costs you something. It may mean giving of your paycheck so you can worship God with the giving of your finances. It may mean being rejected from certain family members because they see you as one of those “goodie” Christians that is totally out of touch. It may mean not being accepted in that inner circle of work associates because they know you serve God. We give sacrificially in different ways, but God always, always blesses us with tenfold in return!

When we come to Christ, we make Christ the “head of the firm” and we become His steward, and we are no longer the head of the firm. I distribute my wealth only as a trustee, which makes it no sacrifice at all, remembering it really isn’t mine. He just trusts me to do right by Him. He gives all of us “treasures” to distribute to make the life of others better.

15. The wise men were full of the joy of the Lord as they came into the presence of the Savior. Where can we find true joy and contentment? See Psalm 16:11. Write it here.

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As we continue with our story in Matthew Ch.2, we see God giving his people divine warnings.

16. How did God warn the wise men and what was the warning? V.12

What was God sheltering them from? \_\_\_\_\_

17. What was the first divine warning given to Joseph in verse 13?

How can you see God’s protection revealed? \_\_\_\_\_

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18. What was the second warning to Joseph in verses 21-23??

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19. In v.15, we come to the second “location prophecy” in this chapter of Matthew. You can see it spoken of here. Read the prophecy written long ago by the prophet Hosea in Hosea 11:1.

An angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and told him to take the Christ child to Egypt. Prophecy was again fulfilled that was predicted hundreds of years before.

In v.16 we come to the unleashing of King Herod’s burning jealousy for the right to the throne. Herod wasn’t a Jew; he was an Edomite, and he knew he had no legal right to be the King of the Jews. He even married a Jew at one point to try and rally the Jew’s allegiance. Well,

now is the announcement of one born King of the Jews! He was so threatened by this that he committed some unthinkable acts in an effort to protect his title and secure his power.

His decision comes in verse 16. He sends a command to his leaders to murder EVERY child under two years of age! His thought was, "If I can't be certain who and where the Christ is, I'll just kill them all and that should take care of the problem." He had no regard for human life. The root of jealousy had graduated into a cancer consuming human reason and anything decent. He only cared about himself and didn't mind slaughtering hundreds of innocent babies to be insured that his power would remain.

Think of the men who were committed to that task! What an awful commission to be placed upon your life! There is no way one can do something like that and not be changed forever. King Herod was too cowardly to be apart of that himself; he sent forth a decree and had it done for him.

20. This brings us to our third "location prophecy" in this chapter. We find it in v.18. Write it in the blanks below. See it predicted to happen in Jeremiah 31:15.

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There was so much weeping and outcry from mothers whose children were pulled from their arms and slaughtered right before their eyes that I imagine you could hear the chaos, wailing, and holocaust for miles around that city. The women refused to be comforted because they knew the killings were unnecessary, cruel, and senseless. These were hundreds of murders of defenseless babies done by the hand of a mad man.

God has been so diligent to lead Joseph and his family all this time and to keep them out of harm's way. Let's look at the rest of this chapter to find the fourth "location prophecy" and to see how God protects this little family as they follow His leading.

21. Read Matthew 2:19-23.

After all the traveling, where did Joseph, Mary and Jesus end up (v. 22b, 23)?

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Matthew here is using the word "Nazarene" as a synonym for one rejected by men. Nothing good was ever known to come out of Nazareth. This would be the fourth prophecy fulfilled in the second chapter of Matthew.

What an amazing story about the leading of the Lord for those who seek Him diligently! God's plan for the Savior was fulfilled at every turn; even when men opposed those plans, God's ways were performed! Oh, He is so powerful! No man can get in the way of what God has

ordained to be! Even if we try to follow God and our plan doesn't exactly match up with His, God will get you to where He ordains you to be. He will get you there dear one.

Our all-knowing God knew from the beginning about King Herod's plans to kill the Christ. Wouldn't Satan have loved that? Satan would have loved to snuff out the very One who was sent to save sinners. He would have loved to defeat Christ in infancy before He could get to the cross and make a way for all to be redeemed!

Joseph and Mary had only a small glimpse of God's plan through this child. They knew He was different, but they couldn't have known what Jesus would mean to a whole human race and the spiritual battle that was going on right in their midst. They were just two people involved in a HUGE plan orchestrated by God, and their part was to just follow His leading daily. Inquire of the Lord, believe Him at His Word, and do what he said to do!

22. God's guidance comes as we seek it. What do you need answers for today? Are there several directions you can take and you need God to turn you as in the way you should go? Take time here to write your thoughts before God. Cry out for His divine protection in making a decision that could unknowingly cause you harm, or future difficulty. Ask Him to speak to you through His Spirit, through counsel etc. Share with your group for prayer, if possible.

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23. That old prophet Isaiah's prophecies *were* right. They came to pass just as He had predicted. Read Isaiah 58:11-12. What benefits come to those who walk with God?

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We have the promise of Almighty God being our continual guide, and we also have the promise that we shall raise up the foundations of many generations as we live for Him! God will guide me and God will guide my loved ones! Praise Him! Praise Him because He is ever faithful! We can depend on Him to guide our lives daily, just as Joseph and Mary needed God Almighty to guide and protect their journey.

## **Wrapping it up and making it personal!**

Isaiah promises that, as we come into the presence of the Lord, He exchanges our weariness for His strength, and our discouragement for His hope. He waters us with His Spirit until we feel like a well-watered garden whose waters do not fail. He gives us the ability to go on, and not just go on like an unfeeling robotic machine, but to go about our lives with joy and passion and vision. Oh, God, help us to be resolved not to live out our lives for our own personal gain, but to live as a servant of the King in the midst a dark world, until You come to take us home.

Read over Isaiah 58:11-12 slowly one more time, this time praying these Scriptures over your life.

I want to end with you and I praying a prayer together that I found in my devotional written by Charles Spurgeon.

Pray with me won't you?

*“Lord, help me to glorify You: If I am poor, help me to glorify You in contentment; If I am sick, help me to glorify You by patience; if I have talents, help me to extol You by spending them for You; If I have time, Lord help me to redeem it, that I might serve You. I have a head to think Lord, help me to think of You and for You. You have put me in this world for something, Lord, show me what this is, and help me to work out my life purpose: I cannot do much, but just as the widow put in her two small coins, which were all she had, so Lord, I cast my time and eternity too, into Your treasury; I am all Yours; take me and enable me to glorify You now, in all that I say, in all that I do, and with all that I have.”*

Have a blessed week, Sisters in Christ!