

**TEXT** Matthew 2:13-23; Psalm 91

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES** Psalms 37:3,25; 103:3-5; Isaiah 40:29-31; 43:2; Revelation 3:10

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to describe the method by which God spared His Son Jesus from the wrath of Herod. They will further be assured that God’s providential care will surround the one who is God’s child today.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. — Psalm 91:11

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. — Psalm 91:9,10

**RESOURCE MATERIAL** Tract No. 22 — Weighed in the Balance  
Tract No. 66 — Rescued by God from a Watery Grave

**ANSWER TITLE:** **A Warning in the Night**

**SEARCH TITLE:** **God’s Providential Care**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

Warned by an angel of God in a dream to flee Bethlehem and the wicked King Herod, Joseph took Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt, fulfilling the prophecy in Hosea 11:1. King Herod, furious at being outwitted by the Wise Men, ordered the killing of all the male children in Bethlehem and all that region who were two years of age and under. This brutal action fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah when he wrote, “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not” (Jeremiah 31:15).

Egypt, where God’s people had been slaves, became a refuge for His Son—Jesus. For a year, perhaps slightly more, they lived in Egypt, the Bible does not tell exactly where. Tradition says it was at On, or Heliopolis, located only ten miles from where modern Cairo is built. It is assumed that Joseph and Mary traveled with a caravan as was the custom in those days for reasons of safety. Because of bandits who robbed and killed, it was foolish to travel without the safety of large numbers. Joseph and Mary had to be especially careful for they had the rich gifts that the Wise Men had brought, which may well have financed their trip to Egypt and their living there.

**YOUR OPENER**

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# God's Providential Care

## RESPONSES

1. The dictionary defines *providence* as “divine guidance or care. God conceived as the power sustaining and guiding human destiny.” Allow time for the students to give their definitions, then discuss how it is possible to enjoy this blessing. Help the class to bring out that God guides as much as each soul will allow. The people who yield to God and serve Him have His promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). Other promises of divine providence are in Psalm 23:5; Matthew 6:31-33; John 14:2; 2 Timothy 4:8.

2. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream so, that Jesus might be protected from the anger of Herod. The prophecy had been given approximately 740 years before, that God would call His Son out of Egypt. Bring out in discussion that God's wisdom provided the safe course for His Son at this time. A few years later, however, God's love for the world allowed Jesus to be crucified so that all who believe in Him might have their sins forgiven. Divine providence provided safety for Jesus until that appointed time. Ask your students for other examples of providential care in the lives of God's children.

3. He felt mocked by the Wise Men's leaving the country instead of returning to Jerusalem. Since he had no idea which child was a threat to his kingdom, he ordered the slaying of all children in that age group. In what way is Christ a threat to a sinner's kingdom? Point out that Christ is opposed to a life of sin, which many wish to hold onto. If Herod had realized what Christ's kingdom offered him, would he have resisted it? Discuss what Christ offers the sinner.

4. The angel appeared to Joseph three times. One time God himself spoke directly to Joseph in a dream. Encourage your students to read their lists of ways in which God shows His providence, then emphasize that often God uses His Word to guide them. He may use a thought from a sermon, testimony, song, or their conscience to show them His will and direct them in His way. Prayer is very important in helping them follow God and, thus, enjoy His providential care.

5. The key is in Psalm 91:1,2—dwelling in the secret place of the most High, and choosing to trust Him. Ask the class if they would not appreciate divine providence being manifested in their behalf. Bring out in discussion the fact that this tremendous blessing is dependent largely upon the individual. When a person determines to keep himself in the center of God's will and has the purpose in his heart to trust God in every circumstance of life, then God does sustain and guide that person. “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:6). “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8).

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**KEY VERSE:** Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. — Psalm 91:9,10

**RESOURCE MATERIAL:** Tract No. 22 — Weighed in the Balance, Tract No. 66 — Rescued by God from a Watery Grave

We walk through a world that is fraught with dangers, and the only source of true protection is God. In our text, God's providential care is beautifully shown by the angel's directing Joseph to take the young child Jesus and His mother to Egypt. However, God's care is not limited to the preservation of His Son. It is fulfilled in the life of each one who follows His Word.

1. Give a definition of divine *providence*. Who enjoys this blessing?
  
2. By whom and for what reason was Joseph instructed to take Jesus and Mary into Egypt? Why was Egypt chosen? See Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15.
  
3. Why did Herod order the killing of children who were two years of age and under? See Matthew 2:16-18.

## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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4. In Matthew 1 and 2, how many times did an angel appear to Joseph with instructions from God? List several ways that God shows His providence today.

5. In Psalm 91, a key is given by which divine providence may be obtained. What is that key?

6. In applying the Scripture to our day, make a list of at least six blessings promised to us in Psalm 91.

7. When the devil tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:6), he quoted Psalm 91:11,12. What part of that quote did the devil leave out? Why did Jesus resist the temptation?

8. Psalm 91:14-16 seems to be a direct quote from God. What might be meant by “set his love upon me,” and “shew him my salvation”? See John 3:16.

9. Give an example of divine providence in your life, or in the life of someone you know.

6. These blessings include: He will deliver us from danger (verse 3), protect us (verse 4), keep us from fear (verse 5), He is our perfect refuge (verse 9), His angels watch over us (verse 11), He will support us (verse 12), give us victory (verse 13), He loves us (verse 14). The primary discussion point is that we need and can receive the same divine help and protection today as did the godly in Old Testament times. The Christian wrestles not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of darkness, so we need the whole of God’s spiritual armor. See Ephesians 6:12-18.

7. The devil omitted part of verse 11, “to keep thee in all thy ways.” Whether this omission was meant to change the meaning of the verse or not, we don’t know, but we do know that Jesus seized on the great principle involved in the promise itself. Jesus rejected the temptation because He knew that such an act would be presuming upon God’s providence. When we are tempted to recklessly presume on God’s divine protection, we have fallen into the devil’s trap. Satan will use any means he can to make us follow him. God’s providential care showed Jesus the folly of following the devil’s temptation. Divine providence will help us today when we are facing trials or the temptations of the devil. God always makes a way for His followers to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). The key is to follow God’s instructions.

8. Those who love God with all their heart and soul will see salvation through His Son, Jesus. John 3:16 restates this in a beautiful way. God gave His Son for the salvation of every one who believes in Him. Throughout the Old Testament the promise was given that the “willing and obedient” should live long in the land the Lord gave. In the New Testament Jesus enlarged the promise: “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26). This is the promise of eternal life—physical death being but a transition from earth to glory. The Psalmist had great comfort in knowing God’s care surrounded him. God’s child today has even greater promise of providential care as he travels the upward way that leads to eternal life.

9. Encourage the students to relate the examples they have written. Sum up the lesson, reinforcing the truth that God’s love and interest in souls are not limited. Miracles of God’s power are happening in all parts of the world, the requirements being that people love, serve, and have faith in God. You might even bring the page from The Light of Hope entitled “Letters.” Excerpts from the testimonies written on this page certainly show that God’s power is in operation throughout the whole world.

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What qualities in Joseph made God choose him for his special role? Does God look for these qualities in us?

Since an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and told him what to do to avoid harm to the infant Jesus, what can we expect of our guardian angel?

What can we do to have God's hand over our lives?

What verses in Psalm 91 tell us what we must do to expect God's protection?

What are some things God might protect us from?

If you did something that your mother or dad or teacher had warned you not to do and you knew it was dangerous, do you think you could expect a guardian angel to help you? Why or why not?

If God is really watching over us and protecting us as Christians, why do accidents and troubles sometimes come to us?

Can you tell of some time when the Lord took care of you or someone you know?

What are some examples from the Bible where God's voice or directions were not followed?

In the ANSWER story, in what way did God provide money for their journey and their stay in Egypt?

## THINGS TO DO

Illustrate God's protection by using the following object lessons: a blanket of love (wrap up in a blanket); God's hand in ours (use a glove); carrying us through each day (sandals or footprints).

Create a matching game using Bible characters and the situations from which God delivered each of them. Make two sets of 2" x 3" cards from two different colors of paper. Use one color for the character names (one name per card) and the other color for the situations (one situ-

ation per card). Divide your class into two groups. Give each group a complete set of names and situations. See which side can correctly match them first. Examples: Daniel/Lions' Den, Three Hebrew Children/Fiery Furnace, Paul and Silas/Prison, Noah/Flood, Children of Israel/Egyptian Army in Pursuit.

Select a child and have him pretend he is Joseph. Let the rest of the class interview him. Have questions prepared to help the interview keep moving.

Show your class a map of the area in which this lesson took place and how far Joseph had to take his family. Compare it with a map of your state at the same scale.

## Answers for ANSWER

### Special Protection

Our lesson today tells us how God protected Jesus from harm. God still cares about His children today. Fill in the missing words of the verse below and then write those words in the puzzle.

The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.

Matthew 2:13

