

Introduction

1. Have you ever wanted to just get away from it all?
 - a. Sometimes the busyness and the hustle and bustle of life is overwhelming. We just need a break!
 - b. Southwest Airlines often advertises their flight specials as “Wanna Get Away?” fares. After the Christmas flight cancellations, they may change their slogan to “Wanna Stay Home?”
 - c. The holy family—Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus—didn’t just wanna get away they *had* to get away to avoid jealous King Herod’s threat against Jesus’ life.
2. An angel warned Joseph of the threat, and the holy family fled to Egypt to avoid Herod’s wrath.
3. **Read Matthew 2:13-23.**

A. Another Dream for Joseph (13)

1. In Mt 1:20-21 Joseph had a dream in which the “angel of the Lord” appeared to him.
2. Here Joseph had a second dream in which again “the angel of the Lord” appeared to him.
3. In the dream, the angel gave him three important commands:
 - a. “Get up (Gk., *egertheis*) . . .”
 - b. “. . . take (Gk., *paralabe*) the child and his mother and escape (Gk., *phuge*) to Egypt. . . .”
 - c. “. . . Stay (Gk., *isthi*) there until I tell you, . . .”
4. The angel gave the reason for this unusual command: “. . . for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

B. Escape to Egypt (14-15)

1. Joseph obeyed the Lord’s command quickly and fully.
 - a. He got up immediately “during the night” and left with Mary and Jesus. (14)
 - b. He stayed with his family in Egypt until King Herod died. (15, cf. Mt 1:19-20)
2. Earlier in Matthew 2:6, Matthew had referred to the fulfillment of prophecy from Mi 5:2,4 as Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Here, Matthew pointed to a second fulfillment of prophecy in the life of Jesus.
 - a. He quoted the Prophet Hosea’s words: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (15)
 - 1) In context this passage was spoken originally to the nation of Israel, the people whom God called out of slavery and oppression in Egypt to go to the Promised Land under Moses’ leadership.
 - 2) Matthew quoted this prophecy as a fulfillment of Hosea’s words in a fuller, Messianic sense as applied to Jesus.
 - 3) Jesus came out of Egypt to free humanity from the greatest oppression, sin, death, and Hell.
 - 4) Matthew again affirmed that Jesus is the son of God and not the son of Joseph.
 - b. Wiersbe shares another possible parallel in this quotation between the lives of Jesus and Moses. “It is impossible not to notice the parallel between Matthew 2:20 and Exodus 4:19, the call of Moses. As God’s Son, Jesus was in Egypt and was called out to go to Israel. Moses was outside Egypt, hiding for his life, and he was called to return to Egypt. But in both cases, God’s program of redemption was involved. It took courage for Joseph and his family to leave Egypt, and it took courage for Moses to return to Egypt” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Loyal*, 31).
 - c. Craig Blomberg writes, “Just as God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again God is bringing the Messiah, who fulfills the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt as he is about to inaugurate his new covenant” (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew in NAC*, 67).

C. Herod’s Wrath (16-18)

1. Herod’s horrible command (16)
 - a. Remember that the wisemen had been warned in a dream not to go back to report the whereabouts of the baby (cf., Mt 2:12). They obeyed that divine direction much to Herod’s ire.
 - b. So, Herod “. . . gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” (16)

- c. Warren Wiersbe comments, “We must not envision hundreds of little boys being killed, for there were not that many male children of that age in a small village like Bethlehem. Even today only about twenty thousand people live there. It is likely that not more than twenty children were slain. But, of course, *one* is too many!” (Wiersbe, 29)
2. Another prophetic fulfillment (17-18)
- a. For a third time in this chapter, Matthew refers to words of prophecy. This time he quotes the Prophet Jeremiah, who originally uttered this lament as in Jer 31:15.
 - b. Wiersbe gives excellent details related to the context of the prophet’s words when he writes, “The first mention of Bethlehem in Scripture is in connection with the death of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel (Gen. 35:16-20). Rachel died giving birth to a son whom she named Benoni, ‘son of my sorrow.’ Jacob renamed his son Benjamin, ‘son of my right hand.’ Both of these names related to Jesus Christ, for He was a ‘man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief’ (Isa. 53:3), and He is now the Son of God’s right hand (Acts 5:31; Heb. 1:3). Jacob put up a pillar to mark Rachel’s grave, which is near Bethlehem.
- Jeremiah’s prophecy was given about six hundred years before Christ was born. It grew out of the captivity of Jerusalem. Some of the captives were taken to Ramah in Benjamin, near Jerusalem, and this reminded Jeremiah of Jacob’s sorrow when Rachel died. However, now it was Rachel who was weeping. She represented the mothers of Israel weeping as they saw their sons going into captivity. It was as though Rachel said, ‘I gave my life to bear a son, and now his descendants are no more.’
- Jacob saw Bethlehem as a place of death, but the birth of Jesus made it a place of life! Because of His coming, there would be spiritual deliverance for Israel and, in the future, the establishment of David’s throne and kingdom. Israel, ‘the son of my sorrow,’ would one day become ‘the son of my right hand.’ Jeremiah gave a promise to the nation that they would be restored to their land again (Jer. 31:16-17), and this promise was fulfilled. But he gave an even greater promise that the nation would be regathered in the future, and the kingdom established (Jer. 31:27ff). This promise shall also be fulfilled.” (Wiersbe, 30).
- c. Remember that Jer 31:31ff contains the only direct reference in the OT to a “new covenant.” Jeremiah 31 is filled with hope for the future of God’s people.
 - 1) The promise of a New Covenant lies at the heart of Jeremiah’s Book of Consolation (i.e., Jeremiah 30-33).
 - 2) Jesus brought that hope as He became our New Covenant and our Consolation from sin.
 - d. Again, as with the words of Hosea quoted in v. 15, the words of Jeremiah are interpreted by Matthew in a Messianic context and applied *sensus plenior* to Jesus.

D. Return Home (19-23)

1. Eventually Herod died. (19)
 - a. We believe that he died around 4 BCE.
 - b. Timeline: Jesus was most likely born around 6 BCE; The wisemen visited about a year or two later around 4 BCE shortly before Herod’s death. This was when the holy family fled to Egypt. If they returned immediately after Herod’s death, then they would have lived in Egypt for only a short time, perhaps a year or less.
 - c. There is a traditional location in Cairo, where it is believed that the family lived during this time.
 - d. Jesus would have been about 3 years old when the family returned to Palestine.
2. Joseph had a third dream in which the “angel of the Lord” again appeared to him as promised with the news that it was time to return home. (19-20)
3. Joseph again obeyed the Lord’s command immediately and took the family back “. . . to the land of Israel.” (21)
4. Upon their return to the land, Joseph heard that “Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod” (22)
 - a. Archelaus was almost as bad as his father when it came to jealousy and cruelty.
 - b. Archelaus was such a violent and aggressive king that in the year CE 6, after only two years as king, he was deposed by the Romans in response to complaints from the population.

- c. Instead of being king of the Jews, Archelaus was reduced to being an ethnarch over about half of his father's kingdom (i.e., Judea, Samaria, Idumea) which he ruled until his death in CE 18. His half-brother Herod II ruled after his death. Herod II presided over part of Jesus' trial (cf., Lk 22:66-71).
- 1) Archelaus' brother Philip I was given rule over Iturea by the Romans.
 - 2) Archelaus' brother Herod Antipas was given rule over Perea and Galilee by the Romans.
- d. While Herod Antipas was somewhat more tolerant and less cruel than Archelaus, it was he who would later have John the Baptist beheaded (cf., Mk 6:14-29).
5. So, the Lord gave Joseph a fourth dream in which he was warned about the threat of Archelaus.
6. Joseph took the family back to Galilee to the town of Nazareth from which their journey had begun (cf., Lk 2:4).
7. Matthew for a fourth time in this chapter notes a prophetic fulfillment based on Jesus' return to Nazareth.
- a. "So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene." (23)
 - b. Blomberg notes, ". . . 'Nazarene' was a slang or idiomatic term for an individual from a very remote or obscure place (much like our contemporary words *hick* or *backwoodsman*)" (Blomberg, 70).
 - c. Again, Wiersbe gives insight into the meaning of this name when he writes, "We will not find any specific prophecy that called Jesus a 'Nazarene.' The term *Nazarene* was one of reproach: 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46). In many Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah's lowly life of rejection is mentioned, and this may be what Matthew had in mind (see Ps. 22; Isa. 53:2-3, 8). The term *Nazarene* was applied both to Jesus and His followers (Acts 24:5), and He was often called 'Jesus of Nazareth' (Matt. 21:22; Mark 14:67; John 18:5, 7).
But perhaps Matthew, led by the Spirit, saw a spiritual connection between the name 'Nazarene' and the Hebrew word *netzer*, which means 'a branch or shoot.' Several prophets apply this title to Jesus (see Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13)" (Wiersbe, 31-32).
- d. Here the account of Matthew synchronizes with Luke's account regarding the return of the holy family to Nazareth (cf., Lk 2:39).
8. G. Campbell Morgan pulls together the four prophetic themes of Matthew 2 when he writes, "Micah said the King should come through Bethlehem; and He came. Hosea said through Egypt He should come, living through all oppression; and from Egypt he came. Jeremiah said Rachel should weep, but that He should Himself stop her weeping, for her captives would be brought back. And finally, the prophets said he would be a Nazarene, a sprout; He would dwell in Nazareth. But the Sprout became a Branch, Spirit-clothed, and flaming the majesty of God. . . . Take these four prophecies, and what have you? Homage and Hatred. Exile and Exodus. Sorrow and Song; Meanness and Majesty. Where is the King? Exiled from hearts and homes and lives; but, thank God, He is leading an exodus of men and women. What is the result of His presence in this world? Sorrow. Rachel still weeps for her children; the suffering saints are all here; but there is a song that rises high above the dirge of sorrow. How is He accounted of men to-day? Men are still saying, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' only they are now talking in past tenses and saying Christianity is worn out; it has had its day. But that is not all. We are crowning Him, we are lifting high above the conflict the song that tells He is King of kings, and Lord of lords" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 19-20).

E. Reflections

1. We must be listening for the Lord's commands. Obey them immediately and follow them fully like Joseph.
2. The Lord watches over and protects us. We must be listening for His leading and follow even when the command seems strange. We are not exempt from ridicule and suffering, but we have the promise of future glory and exultation as we remain faithful and true in following Jesus.
3. Blomberg shares an excellent insight into the application of this passage to our lives today. "Self-appointed leaders of God's people in every age must guard against making the same mistake that Herod did in not recognizing God's true messengers when they appear. Jesus comes to seek and to save all the lost. In so doing he brings justice for the oppressed and threatens those who continue to cling to humanly erected social barriers. There is no place in God's economy for discrimination against any kind of people. God's own Messiah appears in ignominious circumstances to identify with and liberate all those who would accept the gift of forgiveness which those in positions of power and privilege so often reject and despise" (Blomberg, 71)

4. Finally, I say to you, "Rejoice!"

- a. Rejoice in the humble birth of Jesus, the Savior of outcasts, who was born in outcast Bethlehem.
- b. Rejoice as you follow Jesus in your exodus from sin, death, and Hell.
- c. Rejoice as your tears of sorrow and suffering are changed to songs of joy over the deliverance Jesus brings.
- d. Rejoice in the humble origin of the one who is now our King of kings and Lord of lords forever.