

Matthew 2:13-23

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[0 : 00] Now I am, yeah, okay.

Well, that's funny. Well, I invite you to turn with me then to Matthew chapter 2.! We'll begin in verse 13 as we continue our series in the book of Matthew.

If you don't have a Bible with you today, we have them on the back table.

They are already marked to today's passage. And if you don't own a Bible at all, that's our gift to you today. Hear now the word of the Lord. Now when they, that is the Magi, departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you.

For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

[1 : 17] This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet out of Egypt. I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious.

And he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that had been ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation. Rachel weeping for her children.

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel.

For those who sought the child's life are dead. And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

[2 : 26] And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Friends, this is God's holy, inerrant, and inspired word. Now, the way that Matthew reports these events is not how we tend to tell stories, is it?

See, if this were a memoir, for example, Joseph would probably chronicle how his journey to Egypt set off a journey of personal development. He'd start by asking, you know, what kind of man was he before this?

And what was his gut reaction to that dream? How did he respond to it? How did the journey mature him as a husband, as a father, as a man? He might have collected all his thoughts into a journal and titled it, There and Back Again, A Messiah's Tale.

There are a few nerds here. Now, if this were a thriller, Matthew would breathlessly report how after the warning, how after the warning, he sprang from bed, grabbed his coat, roused his young family, departed in the cover of night, with Herod's men hot on their tail.

[3 : 49] On the road to Egypt, they kept a low profile. Watching eyes peered out of every corner, and they kept their heads down while they hid out in Egypt to run for the emergency exit at the first sign of trouble.

He'd tell us how they cautiously returned to Israel and scoped out the new political landscape before venturing back to Nazareth. Or if this were a travel log, Joseph would probably tell us about the scenery along the way, the road conditions, the bed and breakfast they stayed in.

We'd hear about the weather, which tourist spots were worth it, lived up to the hype, so that we could hit the best spots when we came to town. Now, the style of the literature, it tells us something, right?

What the author cares about and what we are supposed to get from it. Memoirs report personal journeys. Thrillers report and hang on action and suspense.

Travel records record the amenities. And so we can look at this passage and by noting the kinds of details that Matthew gives us, we can recognize what's important to him and what should be important to us.

[5 : 08] What is the point that he's trying to get across? So what details does Matthew give us? Well, it's not a memoir.

The only emotion that we actually see in the passage comes from Herod. When he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became furious. But there's no personal development there. That's not what he's most concerned with. It's also not a thriller or an action movie. Joseph's actions are very plainly stated, right?

There's very little detail given. He rose. He took the child and his mother. Departed to Egypt by night. He remained there. Very basic description of the action.

This isn't a thriller. It's not a travel log. We don't even know what road they took. We don't even know how long it took. We don't know how long they were there. We don't even know where in Egypt they went.

[6 : 03] And it's also not a modern Hollywood tale, is it? Matthew doesn't make a spectacle of the great evil in verse 16, does he?

If Hollywood made a movie of this, they'd probably put a lot of emphasis on the great bloody event here. Either to use it as a horror movie or to use it as a drama or to make a point politically or something.

They'd probably zero in on that. What details, then, does Matthew put into focus for us? Where does he direct our gaze?

This apostle writes three short narratives and each of them ends with a statement that those events fulfilled something in God's word.

Matthew wants us paying attention to God and his foreknowledge and his sovereign control of all things. And so we need to leave this passage today saying God is sovereign over all things, including me.

[7 : 23] And as he has done every single passage so far, he is shifting the main character. In the genealogy, at the very beginning of Matthew, it was Abraham and David who were the main characters, and Jesus was the point that they were pointing to.

In the birth narrative, Joseph became the main character, and Jesus remained the main point. When the Magi followed the star, they became the main characters, and Jesus remained the point. And today in the flight to Egypt, Abraham and David aren't mentioned. The Magi are gone. Joseph is just reacting and obeying.

The main characters in this passage are Herod the Great and God Almighty. And Jesus remains the point. And spoiler alert, Herod barely makes it halfway through the passage.

I think that's telling. So friends, let's pray and dive into these three brief narratives. Father in heaven, will you, in this challenging text, both in what it says and how it says it, will you make our hearts attentive and our minds sharp to understand and see your truth so that we might be changed and you might be glorified?

[8 : 54] We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, whom we see here in this passage today. Amen. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet out of Egypt.

I called my son. As it goes, this is a pretty straightforward narrative. Herod is the king that Rome installed as a regional governor over Israel.

and last week when he heard that there was someone born king of the Jews, he sensed a threat that's pretty obvious.

And his plan was to use the magi, the ones who had followed the star, to find this rival king and to kill him. And the last line of last week's passage was chapter 2, verse 12.

[10 : 15] The Lord warned the magi to depart without giving Herod the intel that he needed. And so we read today, we're going to read in verse 16, that Herod was furious and plots to destroy all the

baby boys in the region.

And the Lord who knows all things acts in verse 13 before Herod can. He sends an angel to Joseph and says, get out of Dodge.

And so, up to this point in Matthew, God the Father has sent his son as Abraham's blessing to the world and the king to sit on David's throne and the answer to Isaiah's prophecy and as a light to the nations.

And an entrenched king doesn't like the challenge that that represents. So the Father protects his son, sending him into hiding.

And that's all pretty straightforward until Matthew pauses the narrative and at the end of verse 15 makes the first of three references to the prophets.

[11 : 31] And he says, this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet out of Egypt I called my son. Now, if you have a Bible with cross references in it, you'll see that this is a quote from Hosea chapter 11 verse 1.

You don't need to even turn there to see that there's something odd about this quote. It doesn't predict the future. Out of Egypt I called my son.

Past tense. It's not about the future, it's about the past. This is a reference back to the Exodus which happened even before Hosea's day.

So what's going on here? How is this a fulfillment of prophecy? Sometimes when the apostles who wrote the New Testament quote prophecy, they quote a promise and show how it predicted Jesus and how he then fulfilled it.

Prophecy like this is really easy to see and we saw it back in chapter 1. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

[12 : 49] She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

And so there we saw an oracle from a prophet that makes a clear prediction about the future and that prediction is fulfilled in Jesus.

And that's what we think of, right, when we think of prophecy. But other times, like in today's passage, the apostles do something different and I would say something more.

they quote the Old Testament to show more than, hey, see, God's really clever.

He can predict the future. It's more than that. He wants us to read and hear an introductory sentence that brings to mind something bigger.

[13 : 55] here's a fictitious example and I have to reiterate fictitious. This hasn't happened. Though if you know me and you know my wife, this is something that really could happen.

Let's say we're having dinner and we have a dessert and then I'm about to have more dessert. I like, I have a sweet tooth so that's not out of the question.

And so my wife would, in this hypothetical situation, probably say something like, are you really going to have more? Now, middle school me would respond to that by saying, it's a free country.

And that would communicate that I have the right to eat more pie. But I'm not a middle schooler anymore. I'm a grown man who paid attention in history class.

And so today I would answer that question by saying, we hold these truths to be self-evident good.

Now, that would communicate that I have the same right to do it, but it invokes something more, doesn't it?

[15 : 02] It invokes the whole declaration of independence. And so not only now do I have the right to eat that second piece of pie, no, no, it is now my civic duty as an American to find life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in that second slice of pie.

We've fought the Revolutionary War for freedoms such as this. This is an act, friends, of patriotism. It's deep, isn't it?

Now, the point I'm trying to make here is that when I quote to you, we hold these truths to be self-evident. I don't just say those words.

I am calling to mind something big, something that you know and understand almost reflexively.

And when Matthew quotes Hosea 11, 1, he's also bringing to mind something bigger.

He wants us to think about these events in light of the whole chapter, Hosea 11. You don't need to turn there with me.

[16:17] I will read it to you, parts of the chapter. It is about the Exodus. And it begins with the very words that Matthew quotes here.

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son. And so the Lord is speaking through Hosea, and he's speaking to the whole nation, and calling the nation of Israel a son, reminding them of the Exodus where the Lord had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. But they are not faithful to that call, because he continues, the more they were called, the more they went away. They kept sacrificing to the Baals, which is a false god in that region, burning offerings to idols.

And so even though they turned on their savior, he kept loving them. He kept being a father to them. Listen to all the fatherly language that comes in the rest of Hosea chapter 11.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

[17:37] I led them with cords of kindness, and with bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

But eventually, because the nation persisted in idolatry, the time came for his fatherly discipline. He would punish them, and he would return them to a captivity, much like their time in Egypt.

He goes on to say they shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

And so the Lord promised them an active discipline, a second enslavement, needing a second exodus. How can I give you up, O Ephraim, he says?

How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender.

[18:52] I will not execute my burning anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst. I will not come in wrath.

two weeks ago, when the angel visited Joseph to announce the virgin birth to him, we recounted Israel's history and how they were longing for a savior from political oppression.

The Lord had been faithful to return his people to their homes, but it wasn't quite right, they were still under foreign rule. and so it wasn't really their home.

The exodus wasn't complete. And that's what Matthew's pointing to here in Hosea 11, that the Lord is promising an exodus to his people, but it's not yet complete.

And they need a complete exodus, one that Jesus is living out. on their behalf, the true and the better, the final exodus, right before their eyes.

[20:10] And the second section of today's text shows us what shape that full and final exodus will take, what it looks like.

Verse 16, then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem, and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping, and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more.

last week, Matt introduced us to Herod the Great, and he showed us that he was a brutal ruler.

He had his rivals killed, he had his wives killed, he had his sons killed, all to maintain a chokehold on the government.

[21:20] And so killing the babies of peasant families he never met was not a big deal for him to keep his position.

Now, Bethlehem wasn't big. Scholars believe that the town and the surrounding area had something like 20 boys that age. My son is under the age of two, this hits home for me.

Our children's ministers are serving lots of precious young souls next door. Some here today have lost children. In the womb, in the delivery room, some have lost foster children.

That's the worst loss I have ever experienced was saying goodbye to a foster daughter. This hits home for our church family, I hope. And it hits home for Matthew too.

So he quotes Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. Now, Jeremiah is weeping over the same exile that Hosea prophesied.

[22 : 37] Grief is so intense that he says that Israel's ancestress, Rachel, wept over the destruction of the nation and its children. It's an expression of raw grief.

It should stick with us. And just like we hold these truths to be self-evident, and just like out of Egypt I called my son, these words are an entry point into something bigger.

he's quoting Jeremiah chapter 31. Some of you might recognize that. It's a pretty prominent passage in the Old Testament.

Here's how one scholar put it. The following verses in Jeremiah go on to assure Rachel that her lost children will return so that there is hope for your future.

Matthew intends us to see also in Bethlehem's morning a temporary sorrow out of which God will bring joy and deliverance through Bethlehem's Messiah.

[23 : 51] The main point is bereavement is a prelude to blessing. What kind of blessing? Jeremiah 31 becomes a bridge.

It's the center of this whole passage because when Matthew invokes the grief of Jeremiah 31 he's also inviting us to follow to its conclusion.

It begins with grief and ends with the blessing of all blessings. Jeremiah 31 verse 31 Matthew has pointed us to

Hosea and asks us to remember that a greater exodus is coming and now he points us to Jeremiah and Jeremiah himself connects the exodus to God's new covenant where he will utterly transform his people and their hearts and dwell with them personally and forgive them their sins.

this is the blessing above all blessings. Jesus didn't come to give us gifts or cheer us up or make us successful he came to reconcile us to the triune God the very brilliance of heaven the purpose of the entire cosmos the name above all names.

[26 : 20] So out of Egypt he has called his son Jesus is inaugurating a new exodus and Rachel's weeping turns into a new covenant of ultimate blessing.

Jesus saves us not into a prosperous land but into a living relationship with a living God God and the final section of the text today shows us how he will do that.

But when Herod died verse 19 behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying rise take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the child's life are dead.

and he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod he was afraid to go there and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled that he would be called in Nazareth before we get to the prophecy there I'd like to point out that what Herod was willing to murder babies for in verse 16 his crown he loses in verse 19 gone just like that he was willing to murder babies and it's gone

God's plan kept marching on because God is sovereign not Herod no matter what his title is even the kings of this world with all their might with all their wrath with all their plots wither and die but the Lord and his purposes stand forever Matthew spares us the details but Herod's death is actually awful I won't read it to you now but the ancient historian Josephus records it if you'd like to hear about his death come talk to me afterwards it's interesting Herod could not hold on to his crown but there is a crown of life James 1 verse 12 there is a crown of righteousness 2

[29 : 16] Timothy 4 8 there is a crown of glory 1 Peter 5 4 waiting for every son and daughter of the most high God it waits for everyone who has turned from sin and self to the one true king who doesn't pretend like Herod that they can grasp onto anything and serve themselves it waits for everyone who has turned in repentant faith and received the grace of the new covenant that he established by shedding his blood to forgive their sins and redeem them for Herod that would have meant taking his crown and placing it on the head of the infant Christ giving up his kingdom and laying it at the feet of

Jesus the true king and I suspect that to him that would have felt like dying but in doing so Herod would have received eternal life not death eternal life from that infant king he wouldn't have lost anything because he would have gained everything in Christ make no mistake Jesus this king aims to dethrone you not from a position of power in Palestine but from pretending that you are your own Herod just has more might than the rest of us but apart from Christ that's where we stand fighting against God until we repent and believe see giving up our idols and desires also feels like dying

doesn't it but in

Christ we find ultimate gain that thing that you fight for like Herod fought for his crown it will be taken from you but Jesus freely gives himself to you and in him are all blessings Matthew concludes this passage by saying that Jesus should be called a Nazarene but unlike the other two prophecies here you won't find a cross reference in your Bible to it in fact this statement appears nowhere in the Bible no prophet utters it now there are a number of options that scholars have kind of proposed as what

Matthew is trying to do here you'd like to talk through a bunch of them I'd be happy to do so with you I think the most convincing and the one that fits with what he's trying to do here goes something like this first notice that it's the prophets plural and notice that it's also not a direct quote as if he's citing a specific text rather he's giving us a generalization of an idea that all the prophets are trying to give so I think that what Matthew is doing here is putting before our eyes the fact that over and over again the prophets said that the Messiah would come and be despised by his own people for example Isaiah chapter 53 verses 2 and 3 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him no beauty that we should desire him he was despised and rejected by men and

Nazareth was something of a despised town in something of a despised region of Galilee the high status Jews say in Jerusalem the big city viewed the Galilee region and Nazareth within it somewhat like how the New Yorkers or people in DC view redneck country here in the United States that that's cousin Marian country that's where Jeff Foxworthy researches his redneck jokes the prophets had been saying throughout the ages the Messiah would come and that his own people would despise him from the word go and I think what Matthew is doing here is saying that Christ's upbringing in the backwater town of Nazareth is a fulfillment of that very concept nobody takes you seriously if you're from Yelville Arkansas I had a long lost uncle from

[34 : 38] Yelville Arkansas and so what we're seeing here is that the one who is before all things is going to become accursed on behalf of those he comes to save that's how this new exodus will resolve itself in a new covenant he will bear their shame he will bear their guilt he will take it to his cross nail it there and extinguish it forever by his sufferings so that we might be redeemed as we receive his grace through faith and so we see three moments of Israel's history are filled up they take on their fullest meaning in Jesus Christ now there's something we didn't get the time to fully unpack today and it's this idea that

Jesus isn't just mimicking! Israel's history but he's actually taking it on himself and becoming really the one true Israel so that he can obey on their behalf that's implicit there in that reference that Hosea is calling the nation my son and suddenly Jesus is my son Jesus is taking on the mantle of Israel as a whole and he's going to do what the people could not do in their place and all who are united to him will benefit from his faithfulness and this is going to show up next week in chapter three at his baptism this idea of him associating himself so closely with his people and then again when Jordan brings us into his wilderness temptation in chapter four two weeks from now so be on the lookout for that what should what should we do in light of all this this was a challenging passage there was a lot going on here what do we do what do we believe what what changes at the end of this we've already talked a little bit about laying down our idols where

Herod would not and our desires to a king here are a few more things to think through parents look to Joseph the best thing you can do for your children is to obey God now you have not received instructions like Joseph probably it's my guess you have received a sure word from the Lord his word has so many instructions for parenting the best thing you can do for your children is to seek them out and obey them but even more than his instructions for the parenting task in particular he has given you instruction for putting off the old man and putting on the new this is the greatest thing you can do for your child to show them what a life live for

Christ looks like that's for parents Luke in his gospel reports that an angel appeared to shepherds at Jesus birth saying fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that would be for all the people this king who is taking on a new exodus and bringing in a new covenant for his people by bearing their shame and their guilt that's good news for all people but Herod received it it was good news for him but he received it as bad news does Jesus threaten your place as ruler of your own life yes yes he does is that good news of great joy for you yes yes it is because he's not a king like Herod he's a good king and he's an eternal king so if you've not received this news as good news of great joy will you do that today and if you have already received it as good news of great joy for your salvation remember this passage puts before us Herod the enemy fights Sinclair Ferguson put

it this way right from the very beginning of his life the powers of darkness sought using human instruments that is Herod to destroy the work that God was doing through his son the Lord Jesus Christ Ferguson goes on there I thought his application of that was really interesting he said that one of the times that

[40 : 30] Satan is most active in the life of a believer is in the five minutes right after a sermon when he seeks to distract us and prevent us from turning it on our own hearts reminded me of the parable of the sower a sower went out to sow his seed and as he sowed some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot and the birds of the air devoured it not let that be us and last if you have already received this as good news of great joy remember what the angel reports for not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people this is not a message that stands static it does not end with you and with me it is for the whole world friends how can you make this for the whole world this week let's pray oh lord our god how great is your name in all the earth as we look to your word and see how

Matthew has shown us that our king came to set off a new exodus one culminating in a new covenant lord will you make that redeeming love our theme in the way we live our lives not ruling ourselves but gladly handing over the throne of our life to you the way we share this gospel this good news of great joy with all who hear will you make us bold in dying to self and in sharing this great news of great joy lord will you be glorified as we submit to this infant king who came to be mocked and scorned on our behalf so that he could reconcile us to you and lift us up on the last day father we praise you and we glorify your name amen