

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 2:13-21
“The Miracle of Protection”

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Matthew 2:13-21

Verse 13

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.”

- Again, an angel visits Joseph in a dream. The angel appears directly to Zechariah (Luke 1:11) and to Mary (Luke 1:26). But the angel always comes to Joseph in a dream.
- The angel tells Joseph to take Jesus into Egypt to protect him because Herod is going to attempt to kill the baby. This is reminiscent of other historical events: Pharaoh’s attempt to kill the children of the Hebrews at the time of Moses’ birth (see Exodus 2:1-10) and Athaliah’s attempt to wipe out the line of David (see 2 Kings 11:1-16). Satan tries repeatedly to prevent the coming of the Savior by killing numbers of children.

Verse 14-15

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. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

- Joseph did what he was told to do immediately and without any question. There is no indication of immediate danger. Probably, Joseph could have waited until morning to begin the trip. However, he does not delay. He obeys by beginning the trip in the middle of the night. He serves as a model of obedience for each of us. Twice (see Matthew 1:18-25) he is told what he should do by an angel who visits him in a dream. Both times the instructions defy reason. But both times, Joseph obeys.

- The quotation comes from Hosea 11:1. It originally applied to the calling of Israel out of Egypt at the time of Moses. Matthew, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, sees new meaning in this verse given the story of Jesus.

Verse 16

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he 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.

- Herod was angry when he realized that the Magi were not going to report to him what they had learned.
- In his anger, he ordered that all boys two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem should be executed. This was not thousands as Bethlehem was a small village. It was probably hundreds of boys. However, this shows the extent to which Satan was willing to go to stop the plan of God. Herod thought that he was acting to protect his throne. He did not know that he was acting as Satan's agent.
- Herod knew the age of the child because of the date when the Magi first saw the star (see verse 7).

Verse 17-18

Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled,

***“A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they were no more.”***

- This quotation is from Jeremiah 31:15. Bethlehem is in the region of Ramah. Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife. Israel passed through this region when taken into exile at the time of the nation's fall. While this region and this verse were taken as indication of the sorrow of God's people at various times in Israel's history, Matthew sees it as referring specifically to the slaughter of the children by Herod at the time of Jesus' birth. It is an indication of the great sorrow experienced by this brutal attempt of Satan to stop the plan of God.

Verse 19-21

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

- Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. This would set the time of these events at around that year. Archelaus, mentioned in verse 22, ruled after his father, Herod the Great, until 6 A.D. That Archelaus had already taken the throne of his father would indicate that these events happened sometime after 4 B.C.
- Again, the angel does not appear directly to Joseph but comes in a dream. The angel’s instructions are quite specific. Joseph is to take Jesus and Mary back to Israel immediately, without delay, because it is now safe to do so.
- Joseph immediately complies with the angel’s command.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Miracle of Protection*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)