

## **Matthew 2:13-23 – God’s Plan for the Christ-child: Protect and Prepare**

Calvin, TSK, GreekLexicon, Dickson, Rienecker, Geneva, Vincent, PNT, Robertson, Handfuls, Trapp, Poole, Maclaren, JFB, Henry, INT?

**Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:** Christ’s birth was a most remarkable event in church history! **Angels brought direct messages** to Mary and Joseph separately. A **virgin would conceive** and bear a Son! **John the Baptist leaped in his mother’s womb** when Mary came near. **Old Elizabeth called her young cousin “the mother of our Lord.”** **Angels sang about his birth.** **Shepherds received messages from heaven.** **A star identified him to foreigners.** Wise men sought, found, **worshipped him,** and **brought him gifts.** Many were filled with awe and praise, but not King Herod. **He saw Jesus as a risk instead of a Redeemer who would save men from their sins.** So he tried to kill Jesus. He tried to destroy the line of promise. But God had a different plan. Jesus had a mission!

Our headings are:

**God protected the Christ-child in Egypt from Herod**

**God Prepared the Christ-child in Nazareth for his work**

Our goals are: **That you will see the guiding hand of Jehovah in the life of the Messiah who came to live and die for the sins of the world, and that you will then praise him all the more!**

### **God protected the Christ-child in Egypt from Herod**

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an **angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream,** saying, "Arise, **take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt,** and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will **seek the young Child to destroy Him.**"

#### **1. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee to Egypt in order to protect the Christ-child from the murderous Herod the Great.**

Any man would want to do this to save his son, but Joseph knew he was raising the Son of God, sent by God, who would take away the sins of the world by dying on the cross. This was more important.

14 When he arose, **he took the young Child and His mother by night** and departed for Egypt,

#### **2. Joseph did not hesitate to obey the angel of the Lord, speedily taking his family that same night to Egypt.**

Every mother here knows how difficult it is to travel with a baby - no water to wash a child, no diaper wipes, or a place to sleep!

It may have **seemed as if God forgot his promises**... all those promises he made to Mary and Joseph before and at his birth! Isn’t he the Savior of the world? How come he has to run?

**But you see how much Mary also trusted in the Lord that she would obey what seemed like a crazy command.**

God said he would speak to them again later, and **that was sufficient for them!** They did not question God why he did not hit Herod with lightning and kill him!

**But why go to Egypt instead of some other place?** Safety! Egypt was the closest Roman province where Herod had no ties.

15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "**Out of Egypt I called My Son.**"

**3. This event confirmed a prophecy from years before: That God would call his Son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1).**

And there were spiritual significances to this:

Israel went into Egypt to be preserved from dying. **Jesus went to Egypt to be preserved from dying.**

God's people came out of Egypt for their freedom. **Jesus came out of Egypt for his people's freedom.**

Of course God could have killed Herod, but he wanted to teach people to trust him... and to trust his Word.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

**4. Seeing he did not get the help of Christians to murder the one who came to die for the sins of the world, Herod became very, very, angry.**

He felt deceived. The word for "deceived" is literally translated "**made fun of**" or "**mocked.**" No one likes this. But **it was God who was mocking him!** (Psalm 2) And feeling deceived, Herod resorted to great ungodly anger... angry for the wrong reason.

(Herod had mocked the wise men by telling them he wanted to worship the Child as well, so God mocked him!)

**5. Herod then sent his army, who willingly went, to slaughter all the male children in Bethlehem 2 years old or younger.**

He did what **Esau his father** wanted to do, kill Jacob. He did what **Doeg the other Edomite** did to the priests for the wicked King Saul! He made this calculation to the age of 2 to ensure that he would murder the Lord Jesus.

**But think about this: Herod was angry with the wise men but he ordered the killing of babies, hurting of his own people.** The babies did nothing to be murdered. Even pagans would save babies in war! Even if the wise men were wrong (they weren't), this was a gross miscarriage of justice... it was **injustice against the weakest and most helpless members of society**... and against covenant children - and because of the wise men's "sin." Satan, through his agent, did this!

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon **stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.**

Just to be sure, history records Herod killed one of his own infant sons...just in case he was the chosen one!

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A **voice was heard** in Ramah, Lamentation, **weeping, and great mourning**, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."

**6. The cry was loud and the mourning was deep among those whose children were murdered.**

The daughters of Rachel were weeping for their children, their male children who would have been leaders in their homes and in society. **Earlier, in Jeremiah's time**, the women mourned for their children when they were taken to Babylonian captivity, now they mourned again.

The name "Rachel" is used because Rachel was buried just outside of Bethlehem. She cried from barrenness and she cried when he thought her son would die, naming him Ben Oni, "son of my sorrow." Then she died at childbirth.

**7. The women refused to be comforted.**

Their children weren't sick. They weren't killed in an accident. They weren't stillborn. They were murdered by a vicious murderer so he could stop God's Word from being fulfilled. How could there be closure? There was a cry for justice!

**8. The bloody slaughter was great and you could imagine the smell a day later...with no sewers to drain that blood away.**

**The prophecy of Jeremiah did not end with the Babylonian captivity and tears. Though they refused to be comforted for a long time, yet they did receive great comforts.** The Jews came back to the temple after Babylonian captivity! And the same thing would happen again – this time with greater fullness! God is always merciful!

**9. Lessons:**

**a. What God ordains he brings to pass and none can stop him...not a single one!**

Nothing can stop God from preserving the line of promise. Many have tried and they all have died! God even used pagan Egyptians to do his bidding.

Job 5:12 He **frustrates the devices of the crafty**, So that their hands cannot carry out their plans. 13 He **catches the wise in their own craftiness**, And the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them.

**b. When God calls (whether he is calling you out of sin, or to greater sanctification), obey.** It is always the best thing for you, your family, and God's kingdom! Remember Hebrews 11:8, Abraham left Ur at the call of God. He did not question God.

**c. It was faith in the Lord that caused Joseph's foot and Mary's foot to move.** Man may move for different reasons, but only when man moves from faith is God pleased.

**d. While the mothers mourned because their children were executed, there was the one who was coming to die for the sins of the whole world and would comfort mothers in a most personal way.** He would save their souls from hell!

**e. Men who love their power would attack God.** They would lose money for power any day.

**f. The Son of God started suffering at birth in the cave and even through childhood.**

### **God Prepared the Christ-child in Nazareth for his work**

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, **an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph** in Egypt, 20 saying, "**Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel**, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." 21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

#### **1. After Herod's death from a stinking, gross disease, God told Joseph to return with his family to Judea.**

"**Those** who sought the child's life" likely referred to Herod and one of his sons (Antipater) he killed just before his death. The one who wanted to kill his rival was now dead...and his rival – Jesus- was thriving! Who can stop God!

22 But when he heard that **Archelaus was reigning over Judea** instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. **And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.** 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall **be called a Nazarene.**"

#### **2. But instead of going to Bethlehem where he lived before, Joseph instead settled in Nazareth in order to survive Archelaus, the ruler of 1/2 of his father's Herod the Great's territory.**

**Living in Nazareth was a fulfillment of God's prophecy from hundreds of years before**...even before Rome was a nation! Again see the providential hand of God confirming his Word. Joseph would normally have gone back to his own home town, but because of the wicked Archelaus, he turned aside for safety and settled in Nazareth where **Herod Philip, another of Herod the Great's son, reigned over 1/4 of Herod the Great's territory.**

In **doing so, Joseph fulfilled God's Word.** (Herod's other surviving son with 1/4 of his territory was Antipas who executed John the Baptist. The interesting (and important) thing here is **Archelaus was banished by Rome after 10 years**...so Israel had no king. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jacob.

Genesis 49:10 The **scepter shall not depart from Judah**, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, **Until Shiloh comes**; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

“Shiloh” was a figurative name for Jesus.

### **3. Because Jesus was raised in Nazareth, he was rightly called a Nazarene.**

This different from “Nazirite” who were not people from Nazareth, but people who made special vows to the Lord and were separated for special service. Eventually, Christians were called Nazarenes, but it was usually a title of contempt. Nazareth comes from a word that means “weak twig.”

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

In fact, the word “Nazareth” is not used in the Old Testament to describe the place directly. But it is mentioned.

Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

“This (weak) branch is “nezer” the root of Nazareth. Why is this significant? So Jesus would be a Nazarene, but **would be called a “contemptible, ignorant, uneducated man!**”

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Even today Mideast Christians are called Nazarays. In place of my photograph on Facebook you will see a moniker that looks like an “N.” It is an “N.” It was used by the Muslim terrorist to brand Christians as “Nazarays.”

### **4. Lessons:**

**a. No one mourned when Herod died.** He wanted people to like him, but even his children hated him. He murdered his own sons...one...a day or two before he died. He even ordered some men to be killed immediately after he died. What a dreadful reputation to leave behind!

**b. The Lord remembers his people who are in trouble and brings relief at the right time.** He is never late. He is never too soon. It doesn't matter how hard life might seem at times, the Lord is always near.

**c. See how this weak twig became a tree that filled the whole earth.** That poor Jesus, that refugee Jesus, that lower class Jesus...would become the one who would be King of the whole earth! He would save the world from the terrors of hell.

**d. This lowly king, who indeed was God of all the world, would give his life for people instead of killing people so he would live.**

**Conclusion:**

**God sent Jesus with his family to Egypt to keep them safe from the murderous Herod** and his son...but more...God wanted to **show this wonderful picture of Jesus coming out of Egypt to bring freedom to his people**. Jesus would return and grow up in Nazareth, preparing of his life's work. Ultimately, he would cross from death to life and being resurrected (pictured by Israel coming out of the Red Sea), he would give life to his people. No one could stop him.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus:

**1. Trust the Lord with all you heart and obey him.** It doesn't matter how hard and desperate life might be, God will take care of you. When he says "move," move!

**2. None can stop the kingdom of Jesus from spreading...absolutely none!**

**3. Work to spread the kingdom by telling others Jesus has come and he lived and died for sinners.**

**4. Praise God for sending his Son to live and die for you.**

Finally, if you are still carrying the burden of sin on your life, know that you don't have to. Jesus is willing to give you credit for what he did. He died for the sins of the world.