

The Gospel of the Kingdom – Pt 4

1. The Flight to Egypt - *Matt 2:13-15*

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." 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 15 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."

While Joseph was not Jesus' natural father, he was his legal father and was charged to protect him. This is why the angel appears to him a second time to warn him of the danger to Jesus. What we need to understand is that God speaks to those who are receptive to His words and who are willing to be obedient to His words, which Joseph was.

While Egypt was only 90 miles from Bethlehem it was sufficient to provide protection from Herod and his decree as Egypt was outside of his jurisdiction. It is interesting that the gifts of the wise men are probably what sustained them during their exile in Egypt.

Matthew continues his quest to tie Jesus to Old Testament prophecies when he quotes Hosea:

Hos 11:1

Then Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Just as the infant nation of Israel was called out of Egypt, so now is the infant Jesus is being called out of Egypt to establish a new Kingdom and a new people.

We need to remember that the Jews being in Egypt was voluntary as they went there to escape famine and death during the time that Joseph was Pharaoh's second in command. However, they stayed there for generations and overstayed their welcome when a Pharaoh came into power that did not remember Joseph and what he had done for Egypt. This new king was threatened by the rapid growth of the Jews living in his land.

It also certifies Jesus as God's promised Son.

2. Herod Kills the Male Children - *Matt 2:16-18*

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. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

As we mentioned last week, Herod was threatened by the announcement that a new King of the Jews was born in Bethlehem. He thought he had manipulated the Wise men to discover where this child was, only to find out that they were the ones who had duped

him by going back to the east without sharing with him. This enraged him and caused him to take this drastic step to eliminate his competition.

His estimation from his previous conversation with the Wise Men is that this child was 2 years old or younger and thus he targeted this age group.

18 "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."

Matthew then quotes Jeremiah 32:15 which was the cry of the mothers of Israel personified in Rachel mourning for the children that had been carried off into exile and were presumed dead.

This also brings to mind the episode in Genesis where the King of Egypt has enslaved the Jews, but even though they are treated in the worst way, they are prospering and multiplying which threatens the Egyptians. As a result, he commands that all the male children of the Jews be put to death.

Moses' mother put him in a basket on the river that is discovered by Pharaoh's daughter who raised him as her own.

This is another parallel that Matthew draws on to compare his own narrative to the Pentateuch and the comparison to Moses, as both of them escaped death and went on to become the leaders of their people.

3. The Return to Nazareth - Matt 2:19-23

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 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." 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

Herod was so threatened by the birth of Jesus that he commanded that all male children in the area of Bethlehem be killed, but in the end, he is the one who dies, and his rule comes to an end. Thus God sends an angel to let them know that the immediate threat has passed and that they can return to Israel.

22 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.

While Herod is dead, his son Archelaus took over as king over Judea. Unlike his father, who was tolerated by the Jewish elite because he rebuilt the Temple and many other buildings and palaces, Archelaus was despised by the Jews and had the same mean streak as his father. Rome didn't trust his sons and divided Herod's kingdom into three parts. So Archelaus only had power over Judea, Samaria and Idumea. Caesar, fearing that he didn't have the favor of the Jews and that it might lead to revolt, eventually deposes him and banishes him to Gaul.

23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Still, Archelaus was an immediate threat to them, so instead they went to a small town in Galilee called Nazareth. It was remote and insignificant. It was also a place where there was a Roman garrison and thus interacted with people from all over the known

world. For this it was looked down upon by the Jews. This is why it is recorded in the Gospel of John that:

John 1:46

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

It was the perfect place not to draw attention and to raise their child.

Unlike some other prophecies that Matthew quotes there is no direct Old Testament prophecy that fits his quotation. Instead, there are extrapolations that can be inferred.

For example

Isa 49:7

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,

Nazareth was held in low esteem as a nothing town in the middle of nowhere that was looked down upon by the rest of Israel. Jesus would be despised from His own people and would come from such a place.

Also,

Isa 11:1

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

It has been inferred that the Hebrew name for Nazareth stems from the root word for "branch" which has been quoted by Isaiah.

Nevertheless, all four of the authors of the Gospels are quoted as calling Jesus a Nazarene.

Conclusion

- God did not protect Joseph, Mary, and their child without their cooperation. Protection requires obedience.
- God may allow some things that are hard to understand to enter our lives in order to accomplish His will.
- Even after a particular trial is resolved, there may be other problems to face. God's protections and providential care will always be needed, because our enemy, the Devil never ceases his attack on the faithful.

God is always at the ready to protect his plan for our lives.

While things may pop up that come as a surprise to us, nothing surprises Him and He always has an answer at the ready.

God saved Jesus from Herod and Archelaus. Both ended up dying and only Jesus went on to achieve His destiny.

The Bible tells us that He predestined those He foreknew. In other words, He knew in advance which of us would call Him Lord and put together a plan, a destiny, for us that the enemy can't destroy.

He can attack us, and he can throw obstacles in our way.
But he can never stop what God has planned for us.