

CHRISTMAS TIME

"DESPERATE TIMES"

MATTHEW 2:13-18

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14, *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with your all.*

Joseph, the father of Jesus "so it was thought" (Lk 3:23), didn't know what he didn't know. He didn't know that mad Herod was on the verge of searching for Jesus to put him to death. Good that providence was on his side. God, of course, did know what the forces of evil, personified in the Roman ruler, were up to and so warned Joseph in a dream. The angel of the Lord, who told him earlier to take Mary home as his wife (1:20), appeared to him again and told him to take Jesus and his mother to Egypt and to stay there indefinitely (2:13). A year or so later, following Herod's death, the angel returned to tell him to go back to Israel, but not to Judea where Archelaus, Herod's son, was reigning (2:19). A chip off the old block, Archelaus, early on in his rule, cleared the temple of rioting Jews, demanding redress for a variety of past grievances against Herod and his ministers. Unfortunately, in the process three thousand of them were killed. Like Herod, Archelaus also posed a threat to Jesus, so instead of Judea, the angel

God is like a judo expert who redirects the evil efforts of sinful men and Satan in such a way that they become the very means of doing good.

– Millard J. Erickson

directed Joseph to withdraw to Galilee, to the sleepy little village of Nazareth, Mary's hometown (Lk 1:26-27), where Antipas, a more tolerant son of Herod, was in charge. All of the moves directed by the angel proved to be not only in the interest of safeguarding Jesus and his family but also in the interest of fulfilling prophecy. Matthew makes this obvious by connecting the escape to Egypt to Hosea 11:1 (2:15), the slaughter of the children to Jeremiah 31:15 (v. 18), and the identification of Jesus as a Nazarene to the prophets (v. 23).

The operation of divine providence in Matthew's nativity narratives is impossible to miss. God was at work behind the scenes unbeknown to Joseph and unbeknown to Herod as the narratives' upper story unfolded. He guaranteed Jesus' legal claim to the throne of David and frustrated the evil intentions of the king through careful directions given to Joseph by the angel (Mt 1:20; 2:13) and through Joseph's meticulous obedience that coincided perfectly with them (Mt 1:24; 2:14).

Divine providence implies that a sovereign God actively guides and directs the course of everyday events to fulfill his intended purposes. While God may be said to cause certain things to happen, God may also be said to use the free actions of human beings, which he doesn't cause, to accomplish his purposes. His providential working even includes the sinful actions of humans. Consider what Joseph said about what his brothers did to him, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Ge 50:20), and what Peter said about what his fellow Israelites did to Jesus, "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate

cont. pg. 2

plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (Ac 2:23). With respect to Gospel's birth narratives, little did Caesar Augustus know when he made his decree (Lk 2:1) that the census he was ordering would lead to the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy that "one who would be ruler over Israel" would be born in Bethlehem (5:2). And little did Herod know that his scheme to do away with Jesus would be for naught because the first family had fled to Egypt beforehand (Mt 2:13) and would lead to the fulfillment of the words of Hosea and Jeremiah (vv. 15, 18).

Practically speaking, divine providence is central to the Christian life. "It means that we are able to live in the assurance that God is present and active in our lives. We are in his care and can therefore face the future confidently, knowing that things are not happening merely by chance. We can pray, knowing that God hears and acts upon our prayers. We can face danger, knowing that he is not unaware and uninvolved" (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1:387-88). Consider this. Providence cannot be turned on and off. It's rooted in the very nature of God and functions round the clock, not just every now and then. Nor is it limited in scope; it touches every life from that of presidents and prime ministers on one end of the social spectrum to Indian untouchables and outcasts on the other, as well as every life in between—believers and unbelievers alike. Divine providence made Romans 8:28 true before it was ever written!

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 2:13-18

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."

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 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."

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. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "they" in v. 13.
- * Circle "dream" in v. 13.
- * Circle "Egypt" in v. 13.

- * Box "so" indicating result in v. 14.

- * Bracket "during the night" in v. 14.

- * Circle "fulfilled" in vv. 15, 17.

- * Highlight v. 16.

- * Underline "two years old and under" in v. 16.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Joseph didn't know what he didn't know. Explain what readers know that Joseph didn't.
2. Verses 13-14 convey a sense of *urgency*. How so?
3. See any similarities between Jesus and Moses?
4. Identify your personal takeaway from Joseph's response to the angel (vv. 14-15a).
5. Hosea 11:1 pertains to Israel; Matthew claims it pertains to Jesus. How can it be about both?
6. What do you infer from the fact that Herod ordered boys "two years old and under" to be killed?
7. Jeremiah is about mothers in Israel weeping over exiles being carried into captivity. Matthew claims it's about mothers in Bethlehem weeping over the death of their children. How can it pertain to both?
8. What evidence of divine providence do you see in this passage?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about Romans 8:28 and how providence pertains to you.

Matthew 2:13-18 is about two things: God's protection of Jesus and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, which are linked by divine providence, the means by which both are accomplished. After the wise men left for their own country without returning to speak to Herod (2:12), the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream to warn him that Herod, angered by the fact that the wise men had outwitted him, was about to launch a search for Jesus to kill him. The Lord told Joseph to "get up" and "take the child and his mother to Egypt" (a convenient location removed from Herod's power) and to "stay there" indefinitely (v. 13). So he "got up" and "took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt where he stayed" until the Lord told him in a subsequent dream to "get up" and "take the child and his mother to the land of Israel" (v. 19). Through Joseph's exemplary obedience, the Lord providentially frustrated Herod's scheme and safeguarded the first family. Herod responded in character and ordered the execution of all the boys in Bethlehem less than two years of age, resulting in the murder of as many as twenty children.

Matthew connects the escape to Egypt and the infanticide by Herod to two Old Testament texts: Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15. He introduces the first quotation with the words "so was fulfilled what the Lord said through the prophet" (v. 15), and the second with "what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled" (v. 17). The fact that neither text contains a prediction is problematic. The first text alludes to the historical exodus and the second to Israelites being carried into captivity. While it is unclear whether the prophet was referring to the deportation of the northern tribes in 722 B.C. or to the deportation of Judah in 586 B.C., the second is perhaps more likely.

While in some instances "fulfill" indicates that events in Jesus' earthly life actualize predictive prophecy, in others it indicates the way that events in Jesus' earthly life correspond analogically or typologically to those mentioned in the prophetic text. That seems to be the case here. The escape to Egypt and the infanticide of Herod echo or are profoundly similar to events in the history of

Israel. These links unify the story of redemption and solidify the bond between Jesus and Israel.

Hear what the commentators say about these two quotations. On the quotation from Hosea, one writes: "In the context of his prophecy, Hosea recounts how God had faithfully brought Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. Matthew's point of comparison is the corporate solidarity between the nation Israel as God's son being rescued and delivered by God, and Jesus as the One who will be revealed to be God's 'Son' par excellence" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 111). On the quotation from Jeremiah the same writes: "Matthew's use of the Jeremiah narrative is similar to the way that he earlier cited the prophet Micah (cf. 2:15). This is not fulfillment in the sense of prediction-accomplishment (see comments on 1:23; 2:6, 13-15); rather, it is a case of analogical correspondence. As Herod attempts to eliminate the newborn king of the Jews, the events of Jesus' earthly life correspond analogically to an earlier attempt by a foreign power to wipe out God's chosen people. But the advent of Jesus' life also marks the arrival of the comfort promised to the Jews sent into exile" (113).

Having read Matthew 2:13-18, readers leave convinced that fulfilled prophecy confirms that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that the providence of God evident in the life of the first family is at work behind the scenes of their own lives. God could have orchestrated the events of Jesus' birth differently, especially with respect to those involving Herod. Rather than prevent Herod's search for Jesus in the first place, God chose to protect his Son by sending him to Egypt and later by securing him from Egypt. In terms of providence, rather than prevent Herod's sin, he chose to use it to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. God sometimes permit what he doesn't prefer in order to accomplish his purposes.

The Message of the Passage

God providentially works in all things to accomplish his redemptive purposes in the world and his good purposes in the lives of those who belong to him.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 13 **They** After being warned in a dream, "the Magi departed. With some vivid touches (Matthew's characteristic look and the present tense in the verb) once again we have an angel appearing to Joseph; as before, he does so in a dream" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 42); lit., "Look, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream."

v. 13 **dream** Matthew alludes to revelation through dreams five times in the opening chapters of his Gospel. "Matthew has an angel appearing in a dream several times (1:20; 2:13, 19), and when there is no angel he still speaks of divine communications taking place in dreams (1:12, 22; 27:19)" (42). "Dreams were commonly believed in the ancient world not only to be of natural origin but also to be a medium of divine communication. In the Old Testament, dreams were believed to derive from natural (Eccl. 5:3), divine (Gen. 28:12; Dan. 2:19), and evil (Deut. 13:1, 2; Jer. 23:32) sources. The primary use of the dream in the Old Testament is to point to a message from God about present activities (Num. 12:6; Job 33:15-17) or future events (Gen. 37:5-11; Dan. 7:1-28). In the New Testament, the expression 'in a dream' (*kat' onar*) is found only in Matthew's Gospel. In each case the dream is in some way related to Jesus and involves some kind of supernatural guidance (cf. Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22; 27:19)" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 76).

v. 13 **Egypt** "Egypt, the southwestern neighbor of Judea and now a Roman province with a large Jewish population especially in Alexandria, was a natural place for Jews to seek asylum when in political danger at home; a substitute for the Jerusalem temple had even been set up by Jewish exiles in Egypt (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.62-73)" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 79). "The Egyptian border lay approximately eighty miles from Bethlehem. At the border began the most arduous journey, perhaps leading to the main Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, a city that lay on the Mediterranean Sea at the western edge of the Nile Delta. In this large metropolis lived about one million Jews. Almost anywhere in Egypt the family would have been immediately safe from Herod, since it was a Roman province outside of his jurisdiction. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus stayed there until after Herod's death (March/April 4 B.C.), when the angel tells them to return to Israel (2:20)" (Wilkins, 110). "The nearest parts of Egypt proper (Pelusium and the eastern branches of the Nile delta) would be at least 150 miles from Bethlehem, so more than a week's journey is indicated" (France, 79).

v. 14 **during the night** "The expression 'is going to' in v. 13 is best rendered 'is about to' or even 'is on the verge of'" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 67). "Joseph's actions in getting up and taking the child are described in the exact terms of the command given him (v. 13). Matthew adds that this happened by night. This probably means that Joseph acted immediately following the dream (the little family was evidently poor, there would not be a great deal involved in their preparations, and the dream would have conveyed a sense of urgency). Or it may possibly mean that he chose a time for their departure when they could leave unobserved" (Morris, 43).

v. 15 **fulfilled** "Matthew's use of 'fulfill' can indicate the way in which Jesus' earthly life and ministry corresponded analogically or typologically (some say recapitulated or repeated) to a certain aspects of the national history of Israel. This is apparently what Matthew has in view when he cites the prophet Hosea to say, 'Out of Egypt I called my son' (2:15; see also 2:17-18)" (Wilkins, 111). "Matthew sees striking parallels in the patterns of God's activities in history in ways he cannot attribute to coincidence. 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. This is the first of several instances in Matthew in which Jesus recapitulates the role of Israel as a whole" (Blomberg, 67). "Hosea is, of course, alluding to the historical exodus and not making a prophecy about the future. How then can Matthew say that the quotation is 'fulfilled' (*plerothe*)? What we have here is a matter of typological correspondence" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 36).

v. 16 **boys** "Given the small size of Bethlehem and the rural nature of the surrounding region, there may have been as few as twenty children involved, and the killings would have represented a relatively minor incident in Herod's career" (Blomberg, 68). "His ruthlessness knew no bounds when it came to protecting his throne, as can be seen in the oft-mentioned example of the execution of his wife Mariamne and his own sons Alexander and Aristobulus in A.D. 6 or 7, and thereafter his son Antipater (Jos. Ant. 16.11.7; 17.7). And this is but a token of his atrocities. So that there would be widespread mourning at the time of his own death, mad Herod ordered that a member of every family was to be killed when he died (Jos. Ant. 17.6.6)" (Hagner, 37). "Emperor Augustus reportedly said it was better to be Herod's sow than his son, for his sow had a better chance of surviving in a Jewish community. In the Greek language, as in English, there is only one letter difference between the words 'sow' (*huos*) and 'son' (*huios*)" (Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 23).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Parents, sometimes passages like this are hard for us to understand and explain to our kids. Last week we saw the Magi falling before Jesus in joyful worship. This week, we find Herod enraged and consumed with murderous intentions. Why is there evil in the world? The answer is complex but evil exists because we have an enemy who is opposed to God. It's important for us to remember on our parenting journey that the enemy is prowling around looking for an opportunity to devour our children (1 Peter 5:8-9). How can we teach our kids to protect themselves against these attacks? We train them to submit to the Lord and resist the enemy (James 4:7). We teach them to pray fervently (Matthew 18:18-19), put on their spiritual armor (Ephesians 6:11-17), know the truth (John 8:32), be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:9), find refuge in Him (Psalm 91:1-4) and be self-controlled and alert (1 Peter 5:8-9). A great verse for your family to post in your home and hide in your heart is 1 John 4:4-You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. There are definitely times we want to shield our kids from evil but let's teach them to be fighters instead of retreaters. Praise our Prince of Peace who has overcome the world and its evil! (John 16:33)

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read 2:13-18

1. Why did the angel tell Joseph to take his family and leave?
2. How long did they stay in Egypt?
3. What prophecy was fulfilled by their move?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think Herod was so angry about Jesus being born?
2. Was Herod able to stop God's plan?

What R U Going To Do

Look up Ephesians 6:11-17. Draw a picture of yourself with all of your armor on. Make sure you label each piece. Bring it to church next Sunday for 5 extra tokens!

Core Comp

Trinity - I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Ecclesiastes 3:11 - *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

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