



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N50 December 27, 2020

WONDER

“The Wonder of Egypt”

Matthew 2:13-18

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Salvation by Grace

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

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Ephesians 2:8-9



How does the escape to Egypt fulfill the Scriptures?

According to Acts 16:30-31, salvation is found in a person – not in religion, in morality, in philanthropy, etc. What do stories of the nativity, repeated every Advent, tell us about Jesus? Luke’s stories include (1) the angel’s announcement to Mary (1:26-38), which reveals she, a virgin, will conceive and bear a son who will be great, will be called the Son of the Most High, and will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever (1:26-38), (2) her subsequent visit to Elizabeth, which confirms her pregnancy and the identity of child in her womb (vv. 39-44), and (3) the birth of Jesus and the shepherd’s visit in Bethlehem, which confirms the child’s full humanity and the historicity of his birth (2:1-7). Matthew’s stories include (1) the angel’s appearance to Joseph, which confirms Mary is pregnant through the Holy Spirit and reveals Joseph’s obedience to the angel’s command to accept Jesus as his son (1:18-24), (2) the birth of Jesus and the Magi’s visit in Bethlehem, which reveals Herod’s animosity toward the child and the Magi’s recognition of him as the king of the Jews (2:1-12), and (3) the holy family’s escape to Egypt and return to Nazareth, which reveals the providential protection of the child and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (vv. 13-23).

Putting the stories together leads to the following chronology of events. If Jesus was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C., either in December or in January, Gabriel must have appeared to Mary (Lk 1:26-38) in the spring of 5 B.C., either in March or April. Her last words to the angel after his announcement were “May your word to me be fulfilled” (v. 38). After the angel left her, she hurried to Judea to visit her relative Elizabeth (1:39-45), who was six months pregnant at the time. Mary was also pregnant when she arrived at Zechariah’s home, for when the baby John leaped in Elizabeth’s womb, she greeted Mary with these words, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child in your womb” (v. 42 NET). Perhaps the conception of Jesus occurred simultaneously with Mary’s last words to Gabriel. Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months (v. 56) until John was born in the summer of 5 B.C. Following the fore-

runner’s birth, Mary returned home to Nazareth now three months pregnant.

A short time later the angel of the Lord (most likely Gabriel) appeared to Joseph in a dream (Mt 1:20-21). By that time, Joseph knew that Mary was pregnant. Perhaps he found out from Mary herself after she returned to Nazareth from Judea. After all, it was news that she neither could nor would keep from him. Matthew described their situation in simple terms: “Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit” (1:18). At that point, the ball was in Joseph’s court, so to speak. What would he do? Well, after the angel assured him that the unborn child conceived in Mary was “from the Holy Spirit,” he did *exactly* what the angel told him to do. He took Mary home as his wife (v. 20), and when the child was born six months or so later, he gave him the name Jesus (v. 25). Details of the narrative suggest that Mary and Joseph were married shortly after the angel’s visit (v. 24) but abstained from sexual relations until after Jesus’ birth (v. 25).

A decree from Caesar Augustus made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem where Jesus was born later that same year, 5 B.C. Although the exact date of his birth is difficult to determine with finality, following an extensive study, one commentator concludes that “a midwinter date is most likely . . . either December, 5 B.C. or January, 4 B.C. is most reasonable. (Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 11-27, esp., 27).

Following his birth, shepherds found the baby Jesus “wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Lk 1:12) in Bethlehem, and the Magi found him sometime later in a house in Bethlehem (Mt 2:11). Apparently, the holy family did not return to Nazareth immediately after Jesus’ birth. In fact, when the Magi had gone, the angel appeared again to Joseph warning him to take the child and his mother to Egypt for Herod was going to search for the child to kill him. The holy family’s stay in Egypt did not last long since Herod died a few months later in March/April of 4 B.C.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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."*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "an angel of the Lord" in v. 13.
- Circle "dream" in v. 13.
- Circle "Egypt" in vv. 13, 14, 15.
- Underline "Herod" in vv. 13, 16.
- Bracket "death of Herod" in v. 15.
- Highlight "fulfilled" in vv. 15, 17.
- Double underline "two years old and under" in v. 16.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. After the Magi left, the holy family went from *where* to *where*?
 2. *What* made their escape necessary and *how* did they know?
 3. They went to an ideal place to take refuge. How so?
 4. What do you infer from the fact that the family left in the middle of the night?
 5. How long did the family remain in hiding? (See notes to compare the time of Jesus' birth to the time of Herod's death.)
 6. In what sense did their escape *fulfill* Hosea 11:1? (See note *fulfilled*.)
 7. Explain what made Herod decide to kill boys *two years old and under* in Bethlehem *and its vicinity*.
 8. How many boys did Herod have killed? (See note *two years old . . .*)
 9. Figuratively speaking, Herod's orders left Rachel weeping again (Jer 31:15). How so?
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about why Matthew wanted his readers to know of the escape from Bethlehem.
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Commentary On The Text

The night after the Magi leave for their own country, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod (Mt 2:12), the angel appears again to Joseph. In all he appears to him three times: earlier, after Joseph learns that Mary is pregnant (1:20); now, after the Magi leave (2:13); and later, after Herod dies (v. 19). When the angel appears the second time, he warns Joseph to flee Bethlehem. “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” (v. 13). The risk is real and imminent for Herod is notoriously cruel. According to one commentator, “Herod’s infamous crimes were many. He put to death several of his own children and some of his wives whom he thought were plotting against him. 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). Joseph responds by doing *exactly* what the angel has commanded, which results in the holy family staying in Egypt for a few months from soon after Jesus’ birth in December/January, 5/4 B.C. to soon after Herod’s death in March/April, 4 B.C.

Matthew explains that Jesus’ descent into Egypt and later return fulfills what the prophet Hosea had said: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (11:1). But what the prophet had said was no prophecy, that is, no prediction regarding the future, so in what sense was it fulfilled? (See note *fulfillment*.) One commentator explains: “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” (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 67). Other commentators add: “There were similarities between the nation and the Son. Israel was God’s chosen ‘son’ by adoption (Ex. 4:22), and Jesus is the Messiah, God’s Son. In both cases the descent into Egypt was to escape danger, and the return was important to the nation’s providential history” (Barbieri, 22), and “As Moses was called to go to Egypt and rescue Israel, God’s son, His firstborn (see Ex. iv. 22) from physical bondage, so Jesus was called out of Egypt in His infancy, through the divine message given to Joseph, to save mankind from the bondage of sin” (R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, TNTC, 42).

When Herod realizes he’s been duped by the Magi, he goes postal! Behaving in keeping with his murderous and

paranoiac personality, he orders the Massacre of the Innocents, depicted in a number of paintings with the same name — two of which are by Peter Paul Rubens. Just to be sure he eliminates the “one who has been born the king of the Jews” he orders the killing of “all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under” (v. 16). The fact that that no historical record exists of his atrocity is understandable. First, the number of victims was small, a rather small potatoes brutality by Herod’s standards. Commentators generally agree, “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,” and even more minor “if, as the grammar allows, the phrase ‘two years old and under’ is translated ‘under two years old’” (Bloomberg, 68).

Matthew explains that Herod’s atrocity fulfills what the prophet Jeremiah had said: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are not more” (31:15). But again, what the prophet had said is no prophecy. In its original context, the passage refers to the lament of mothers in Israel, personified by Rachel, bewailing their sons led off into exile “because they are no more.” One commentator explains fulfillment here as an example of the “application” of an Old Testament text based on analogy. He writes: “As the young men were marched toward Babylon, the Jewish mothers of Ramah came out weeping for sons they will never see again. Jeremiah pictured the scene as Rachel weeping for her children. This is the *literal* meaning of Jeremiah 31:15. The New Testament cannot change or reinterpret what this verse means in that context, nor does it try to do so. In this category [of fulfilled prophecy], there is a New Testament event that has one point of similarity with the Old Testament event. The verse is quoted as an *application*. The one point of similarity between Ramah and Bethlehem is that once again Jewish mothers are weeping for sons they will never see again and so the Old Testament passage is applied to the New Testament event. Otherwise, everything else is different” (Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, 844). When Herod dies, the angel directs the holy family to return to Israel.

As far as the *upper* story of this narrative is concerned, Matthew continues to stress God’s predictions about, and his protection of, the Christ — to assure his readers that Jesus is the promised king. The *lower* story stresses the importance of obedience to God’s word. As he had before, Joseph again does exactly as the angel directs him to do, and as a result, the holy family is spared Herod’s wrath.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 13 *an angel of the Lord* Likely the same angel that appeared to Zechariah (Lk 1:19) and to Mary (1:26), namely, Gabriel, who appears to Joseph three times (Mt 2:20; 2:13; 19).

v. 13 *dream* This is the angel's second appearance to Joseph; each time he appears to him in a dream. "Meanwhile, the parallel revelation in a dream to the magi (v. 12) has secured time for the family's escape. The angel's message begins with exactly the same words as in 2:20, 'Get up, and take the child and his mother with you, and . . .,' and in each case a following clause explains the reason for the change in location" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 78).

vv. 13, 14, 15 *Egypt* "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)" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 110). "A substitute for the Jerusalem temple had even been set up by exiles in Egypt (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.62-73)" (France, 79).

vv. 13, 16 *Herod* "His reign was noted for splendor, as seen in the many theaters, amphitheaters, monuments, pagan altars, fortresses and other buildings he erected or refurbished – including the greatest work of all, the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, begun in 19 or 20 BC and finished 68 years later after his death (see note on John 2:20)" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Mt 2:1). "Herod's later years, as Josephus records them, were dominated by his obsessive defense of his throne, with the royal family of the Hasmoneans [descendants of Mattathias and his sons, the Maccabees (see 1-2 Maccabees)] as the most immediate threat. Earlier in his reign his predecessors Antigonos (*Ant.* 15.8-10) and Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 15.173-78) were eliminated, together with large numbers of their supporters (*Ant.* 15.6) and eventually all remaining members of the Hasmonean family (*Ant.* 15.260-66); even those Hasmoneans directly related to Herod by marriage, his brother-in-law (*Ant.* 15.53-55), mother-in-law (*Ant.* 15.247-51), and even his favorite wife Mariamne (*Ant.* 15.222-36) were killed. In his final years his three eldest sons were also killed on suspicion of plotting to seize their father's throne, Alexander and Aristobulus as Mariamne's sons (and therefore part Hasmonean; *Ant.* 16.392-94) and Antipater because he had married a Hasmonean princess (*Ant.* 17.182-87). Outside the Hasmonean family we hear more generally of Herod's ruthless suppression of political suspects, relying on

espionage (*Ant.* 15.366-69). On one occasion earlier in his reign he faced an assassination attempt, and the ten conspirators were executed together with their families (*Ant.* 15.280-90); such conspiracies and disloyalty, real or imagined, became a more frequent feature of his later years between 7 and 4 B.C. (*Ant.* 16.387-94; 17.41-44; 17.167; cf. *War* 1.654-55). Less directly related to a threat to his throne, but a further testimony to Herod's remembered character, is his alleged plan (fortunately not carried out) to have all the Jewish nobility slaughtered at the time of his own death to ensure that mourning was genuine (*Ant.* 17.174-78). Several of these incidents involved the execution of large numbers of prominent citizens, and in some cases their families and supporters were included. In such a setting the murder of a few infants in a small village in order to eliminate a suspected dynastic rival is quite in character" (France, 84-85).

v. 15 *death of Herod* "According to Josephus, an eclipse of the moon occurred shortly before Herod's death. It is the only eclipse ever mentioned by Josephus and this occurred on March 12/13, 4 B.C. After his death there was the celebration of the Passover, the first day of which would have occurred on April 11, 4 B.C. Hence, his death occurred sometime between March 12th and April 11th. Since the thirty-fourth year of his reign would have begun on Nisan 1, 4 B.C. (March 29, 4 B.C.), his death would have occurred some time between March 29 and April 11, 4 B.C." (Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 13). If Jesus was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C., and Herod died in the spring of 4 B.C., the holy family's stay in Egypt was a short one (cf., 2:19).

vv. 15, 17 *fulfilled* "Matthew has a multifaceted perspective on the way that Jesus 'fulfills' the Old Testament Scriptures. (1) In some cases, 'fulfill' indicates the way in which the events of Jesus' earthly life and ministry bring to actualization predictive prophecy. Such fulfillment may be a specific prediction, as in 1:22-23 (the virgin birth) . . . (2) In other cases, 'fulfill' can indicate the way in which Jesus brings to its intended full meaning the entire Old Testament Scripture, such as his dramatic declaration in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them' (see comments on 5:17-20) . . . (3) In still other cases, Matthew's use of 'fulfill' can indicate the way in which Jesus' earthly life and ministry corresponded analogically or typologically (some way recapitulated or repeated) to certain aspect 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).

v. 16 *two years old . . .* This does not mean that Jesus must have been two years old when the Magi visited him in a house in Bethlehem. "That Herod killed children up to two years old was only to be sure he got Jesus. This is not out of character with Herod. Therefore, the slaying of the children soon after Christ's birth is tenable" (Hoehner, 24).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

God's providential will is accomplished through human obedience to his word.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Do you remember when you realized that bad guys weren't only in movies or books, but actually existed in real life? Sometime in elementary school it dawned on me that the world has some sketchy characters and bad stuff actually really happens. I've always felt like I'm walking a fine line when talking to my kids about the reality of good versus evil in today's world. I want them to be aware and prepared but also live in a sheltered place of trust and hope. Thankfully, God addresses this topic for us throughout the Bible, including our text today. Herod was a bad guy who wanted Jesus dead. Our temptation is to skim over that part of the Christmas story, but we should present our kids with the whole story and allow God to do His work. Give your kids plenty of opportunities to ask questions. When tackling this tough topic, remind your kids that Jesus is already victorious (Rev 17:14). We have our Holy Bible that tells us the end of the story. Jesus wins! Not only that, but God is working on our behalf today to push back evil. What a comfort to know that "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:14). Even when things seem wildly out of control, God is still on His throne. He is the God of order, not chaos (1 Cor 14:33). God had a plan for Mary and Joseph in raising Jesus and He has a plan for us today. We are praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Matthew 2:13-18.

1. What did the angel tell Joseph and why?
2. Why is it important that Joseph went to Egypt?
3. What was Herod's reaction to being outwitted by the Magi?

What Do You Think?

How did God protect Mary, Joseph and Jesus during this time?
How does He protect you?

What Do You Do?

Take turns with your family pretending to be "King for a Day." Do you find yourself being more like King Jesus or King Herod? What do you need to change to be more like King Jesus?

CORE COMPETENCY: Salvation by Grace

I believe that I become a child of God through faith in Jesus, not because of anything I do.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

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.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

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

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.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

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

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

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

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

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

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.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

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.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

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

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

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

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

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

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

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

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

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

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.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

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.

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.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

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

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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