3. God’s Son Brought out of Egypt (2:13–15)

Matthew 2:13 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.”

Just hours earlier Joseph may have already been warned by the Magi that something was afoot.

**take the child**

Notice that Joseph is not told to “take your child.” As we have seen, Joseph is not the biological father, the Holy Spirit fills that role. Also notice that the “child” is always spoken of before the mother.

**flee φεύγω** “…to move quickly from a point or area in order to avoid presumed danger or difficulty—to run away, to flee, flight.”

“The holy family does not escape by means of a miracle but by flight, as the church will also not escape its persecution by miracle but by flight (10:23; 24:16).”

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**What Are The Biblical Options To Persecution?**

What should Christians do when persecuted, what are their options?

**First**, when threatened with persecution, Jesus parents flee.

“And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt” (Matthew 2:14, ESV)

**Second**, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches non-resistance to persecution.

“But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matthew 5:39, ESV)

**Third**, Jesus taught his disciples to flee if they were persecuted on a ministry he sent them on.

“When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next…..” (Matthew 10:23, ESV)

**Fourth**, when Jesus was threatened in Galilee, he fled to Gentile territory.

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“And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.” (Matthew 15:21, ESV)

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi…” (Matthew 16:13, ESV)

**Fifth**, Jesus taught that when Jerusalem was attacked, believers there were to flee.

“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Matthew 24:16, ESV)

**Sixth**, in the New Testament, Christian leaders were often persecuted for their faith. They did not respond with violence.

“For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 2:20, ESV)

**Seventh**, if we look at the early church, we often see Christianity as an underground church, hiding, not fighting government persecution.

Conclusion: In our day, there are various groups that call themselves Christian patriots. They advocate taking up arms against our government. It is common for questionable movements to inappropriately use the name of Christ to advance their evil causes. In addition to Christian patriots, we see it in theological liberalism which calls itself and their churches Christian. And we see it in cults like Mormonism and Jehovah’s Witnesses. None of these are Christian and none should use the name of Christ to advance their causes.

Through the centuries there have been many that have taught that Christians should fight when attacked for their faith. That does not seem to be taught in the Bible.

**Herod is about to**

At this point, Herod is not yet aware that the magi have deceived him—but he soon will be, perhaps the very next morning.

**to destroy him**

Josephus tells us the story of how the Pharaoh in Egypt responded when he heard of a coming king of the Jews—Moses.

“(205) While the affairs of the Hebrews were in this condition, there was this occasion offered itself to the Egyptians, which made them more solicitous for the extinction of our nation. One of those sacred scribes, who are very sagacious in foretelling future events truly, told the king, that about this time there would a child be born to the Israelites, who, if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian
dominion low, and would raise the Israelites; that he would excel all men in virtue, and obtain a glory that would be remembered through all ages. (206) Which thing was so feared by the king, that, according to this man’s opinion, he commanded that they should cast every male child, which was born to the Israelites, into the river, and destroy it; that besides this, the Egyptian mid-wives should watch the labors of the Hebrew women, and observe what is born, (207) for those were the women who were enjoined to do the office of midwives to them; and by reason of their relation to the king, would not transgress his commands. He enjoined also, that if any parents should disobey him, and venture to save their male children alive, they and their families should be destroyed.”

We find this story in Exodus.

“When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” (Exodus 1:16, ESV)

We can compare this story with how this new king, Herod, responded when hearing the story of the birth of a king. We see here Herod as the new Pharaoh and Israel as a new Egypt seeking the destruction of the child.

This theme of Israel as the new Egypt is important, it continues with the apostle John who in his Book of Revelations will symbolically call Jerusalem, Sodom and Egypt.

“and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.” (Revelation 11:8, ESV)

These stories remind us how the life of Jesus is portrayed to us as the recapitulation of the life of God’s son—IIsrael. What Israel once went through and failed, Jesus now goes through and succeeds.

Matthew 2:14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt

by night

Joseph felt the urgency of the situation and left even before sunrise. He may have wanted to leave when no eyes were watching that might betray him. It was a seventy-mile journey to the border of Egypt, and still longer to reach the city that they would have settled in.

It is interesting that Deuteronomy tells us that the Passover took place by night. This may have been in Matthew’s mind as he now contemplates Jesus’ journey to Egypt by night.

“Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.”
(Deuteronomy 16:1, ESV)

Egypt

“Egypt was a natural place to which to flee. It was nearby, a well-ordered Roman province outside Herod’s jurisdiction; and, according to Philo (writing c. A.D. 40), its population included about a million Jews.”

They would have found a culturally compatible community there in which to live.

Fearing the wrath of Herod, Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt. They would have walked the well-traveled road skirting the Sinai that follows the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, an international route of historic importance, perhaps all the way to the thriving Jewish community in Alexandria.

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Matthew 2:15 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.”

**Fulfill**

See Matthew 2:12

So the words “increased understanding”, “filling up”, “completely filled up”, “fills up with additional meaning” and “bring to full significance” appear to flesh out the idea as to what this word means.

**the Lord had spoken by the prophet**

As in Matthew 1:22, Matthew states that these words are in fact “what the Lord had spoken.” The result is that the Book of Hosea is “the word of God.” Matthew believed in the highest form of Biblical inspiration possible. “Notice that he speaks of the words in question not as spoken by the prophet, but as spoken by the Lord through the prophet.”

That prophet was Hosea. “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” (πληρωθῇ)? What we have here is a matter of typological correspondence—that is, a substantial similarity is seen to exist between two moments of redemptive history, and therefore the two are regarded as interconnected, forming one larger continuity; the earlier is thus seen to foreshadow or anticipate the latter, which then becomes a kind of realization or fulfillment of the former.”

“Matthew builds almost every paragraph from the genealogy to the Sermon on the Mount around at least one text in the Old Testament, explaining some event of Jesus’ life from Scripture.”

**Out of Egypt**

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11:1, ESV)

“In context Hosea 11:1 refers plainly to the Israelites leaving Egypt in the exodus; Matthew applies this text to Jesus because Jesus epitomizes and fulfills Israel’s history (Mt 1:1).” We see here “… Matthew’s actual use of Hos. 11:1 as a classic example of

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pure typology: “the recognition of a correspondence between New and Old Testament events, based on a conviction of the unchanging character of the principles of God’s working”\(^\text{10}\). So Matthew fills up this passage in Hosea with new meaning and thereby gives it a fuller significance.

There are “several parallels in Matthew’s infancy narrative to events from the life of Moses, leading some to speak of a christological portrait of Jesus as a “new Moses”. … Clearly, … a “new exodus” motif is present…. Moreover, Jesus will prove faithful where the nation had been faithless; in numerous respects he recapitulates the history of Israel as a whole…”\(^\text{11}\)

“We shall note frequent and quite varied pointers to this New Moses and New Exodus typology as we work through Matthew’s story, but its foundation has been firmly laid at the outset as the reader is invited to recognize in Herod and Jesus a counterpart to Pharaoh and Moses.”\(^\text{12}\)

**my son**

This is the first time that Jesus is referred to as God’s son. “The phrase “my son” in Hosea 11:1 refers to Israel; but Matthew takes it to refer to Jesus because he understands Jesus to embody true, obedient Israel as the son of God. Jesus will reenact a new exodus.”\(^\text{13}\)

“Matthew has taken up that prophetic typology and applied it to the “new exodus” which has now come about through Jesus. Later in this gospel we shall find the language of a new covenant (26:28) and we shall hear Jesus speaking to and about his disciples in terms which belong to the new people of God constituted at Sinai (see below e.g. on 5:5, 48; 8:11–12); as Jesus sets up “his ekklēsia” (16:18) with its twelve leaders “judging the twelve tribes of Israel,” (19:28) the message will be reinforced that the events which constituted Israel as the special people of God under Moses are now finding their counterpart in the even more fundamental and eschatological role of the “new Moses.”\(^\text{14}\)

Matthew sees Jesus portrayed as the perfect Israel. He endures the sufferings and tests of Israel in His own body and life. He does so perfectly, without failure. This event is designed to set before us the Exodus story. As Israel went down into Egypt so does Jesus. As the children of Israel were murdered by Pharaoh, they are so again by the current oppressor of Israel, a Roman installed Herod. As Israel escapes Egypt and re-enters the Promised Land, so does Jesus.


In all points Jesus will represent the nation but this time doing, without failure or sin, what they could not do—and then laying his success and obedience to the account of true Israel.