

Matthew 2

Escape to Egypt & Back

MATT 2:1-23 (also see Luke 2)

MATT 2:1 – Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

[Bethlehem] – The town where David was raised (1Sam 2:6). This was Joseph’s home town where he went to pay taxes (Luke 2:3-4). The custom when a man got married was to pay a dowry to the guardian of the bride and then take his new wife to his own home as with Isaac’s wife (Gen 24) and Jacob’s wives (Gen 29), etc. Joseph and Mary had to go there early because they were being taxed (Luke 2:3-4), but they stayed there because it was Joseph’s hometown.

[Judaea] – This is the same as “The land of Judah” (Ruth 1:7). Why is it called Judaea instead of Judah? It’s because the Greek language pronounces Judah as “Ioudaia”, which is pronounced as “Judaea” in English. Many names are changed from Hebrew to Greek, for example: Judah in the OT is Judas in the NT, Elijah in the OT is Elias in the NT, Jonah in the OT (Jonah 1:17) is Jonas in the NT (Matt 12:40), etc.

Judah’s feminine translation – G2449 = Strong’s says it is “feminine of the word ‘Jews (G2453)’”. But how does that make sense since the land of Judah was named after the man Judah (Gen 29:35)? The first time the word Judea (H3061) was used was in Ezra 5:8 through the Aramaic language by a non-Jew, and it was called a “province”. Also note that in the book of Hebrews, it is called “Judah” (Heb 8:8), (which is of Hebrew origin = H3063) and not Judaea. Matt 2:6 uses “Juda” (G2448). I thought, maybe it is called by a feminine name because it had been downgraded from a country to a province under the rule of foreign power? But no, the idea isn’t consistent. My conclusion for now is that the feminine translation is due mainly to the difference in language and no other reason.

[Herod the king] – [Herod the 1st](#), aka “Herod the Great”. He isn’t the same guy as the Herod during Jesus ministry, because Herod the 1st died shortly after this (Matt 2:15). He was in office from 37–4 BC. He is most famous for rebuilding/remodeling the temple in Jerusalem (Matt 24:1).

[wise men] – Should be translated as “astrologers”. G3097 = of foreign origin (H7248); a magian, Oriental scientist, a magician, sorcerer, wise man, a magus. It was the name given by the Babylonians (Chaldeans), Medes, Persians, and others, to the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augers, soothsayers, etc. H7248 = a foreign word for a magian, chief Magian, Rab-Mag, a Bab, soothsayer, magician, chief soothsayer, or chief of princes, an official of Babylonia. Astrology was forbidden among the Jews (Deut 18:10-12). These were Persians, non-Jews, but how many of them there were is not known. Tradition says 3 because of the 3 gifts given. Songs and traditions call them “kings” because of Psalms 72:10 which calls them “kings of Tarshish” and “kings of Sheba”, which would imply 4 or more people. Kings wouldn’t travel alone, especially with valuables.

[from the east] – Outside of Jerusalem, probably Babylon (current day Iraq). East of Jerusalem was Jericho (about 15-20 miles), then the borderline of the country Jordan was an hour or two walk from there. “The east” had to be some other country besides Israel; Babylon or Persia.

[Jerusalem] – The capital of Judaea.

MATT 2:2 – Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

[born King of the Jews] – The verses they probably read to conclude that messiah was King of the Jews was Isaiah 9:6-7, "...unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder... his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God... the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom".

[we have seen his star in the east] – "...A star/scepter will come out of Israel..." (Num 24:17). It wasn't a real gas burning star; maybe it was an angel, because they are sometimes called stars (Rev 12:4). The "star" moved and stood over where the child was (Matt 2:9). So anyway, they saw something that looked like a star from where they were in Babylon.

How did the astrologers find out what the star was? – They saw that the star was in the direction of Jerusalem, so they read the Jewish scriptures... How did they have access to Jewish scriptures? They gained access to it when the Jews "were carried away to Babylon" (Matt 1:11). Daniel wrote about the messiah while he was in Babylon (Dan 9:25). If it took 800 miles to go from Babylon to Jerusalem, it probably took them about 1 ½ months to get there. It took time to see the star, study the star, figure out that it concerned the Jews, search the scriptures, make preparations, then travel. In total, it probably took a year to a year and ½ from the time the star appeared until the astrologers made it to Jerusalem, because Herod killed all children age 2 and under, according to the time he asked the astrologers when they first saw the star (Matt 2:16).

[come to worship him] – Why worship Him? It's because if messiah was going to be king of the world like scripture says, then perhaps for their own benefit, they wanted to be on His good side.

MATT 2:3 – When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

[he was troubled] – Herod was king, yet the true king was born. There couldn't be 2 kings. Herod knew that he would lose his title of king if the King of the Jews arrived.

[all Jerusalem with him] – **Why was all Jerusalem troubled with King Herod?** – What if Herod didn't want to step down and let the new king take over? War! Rebellion! Herod would use the sons of Jerusalem as soldiers. Others would branch off and support the messiah. Compare to the takeover in 2Kings 11 where the people rebelled to make the true king, who was just a child, the king (2Ki 11).

MATT 2:4 – And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

[he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes] – They were professional scholars of the scriptures. Herod didn't know the scriptures well enough to know where the Messiah would be born, but if anyone knew, he figured it would be these guys.

[where Christ should be born] – In Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

MATT 2:5 – And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

[the prophet] – The prophet Micah (Micah 5:2).

MATT 2:6 – And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

[And thou Bethlehem] – Rephrased: ~Town of Bethlehem in Juda, though you're a small town, you aren't the least significant of the towns in Juda because the most significant ruler (the Messiah) will come from you and he'll rule God's people of Israel~ (Mic 5:2).

[for out of thee] – The understanding was that the messiah would not only be born in Bethlehem, but would also be raised there. This was not the case. Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7), raised in Egypt for a time (Matt 2:15), then lived in Nazareth (Matt 2:23) until about 30 years old (Luke 3:23).

MATT 2:7 – Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

[privily called the wise men] – Why privately? Herod was already planning on how to kill the new king.
[what time the star appeared] – About 2 years beforehand (Matt 2:16).

MATT 2:8 – And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also”.

[sent them to Bethlehem] – Implying that they went to Bethlehem. Some say they didn't go to Bethlehem, but Nazareth (Luke 2:39), because they followed the star (Matt 2:9), not Herod's orders, which took them to Nazareth. However, *they must have been in Bethlehem* in order for this story to make sense! God warned them in a dream so they would escape the area of Jerusalem where the child massacre occurred (Matt 2:13-18), not Nazareth which was 110km/80mi or 4 days journey away.

[young child] – G3813 = any child from infancy to a more mature child. The shepherds saw Jesus when He was both called a “babe” G1025 and a “child” G3813 (Luke 2:16-17). The “child” G3813 grew in strength & wisdom (Luke 2:40), BUT the “child” G3816 (a different word) Jesus tarried behind at 12 years of age (Luke 2:41-42).

[bring me word again] – Which they did not do (Matt 2:12).

[worship] – G4352 = meaning to kiss, to fawn or crouch to, prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore): worship; to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence.

[that I may come and worship him] – He lied. His intention was to kill the child to insure that the kingdom would stay in his power (Matt 2:16).

MATT 2:9 – When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

[the star which they saw in the east went before them] – They followed the star, not prophesy or Herod's orders, to where Jesus was, BUT the star did go to Bethlehem.

[it came and stood over] – Proving that this was not a star, but maybe an angel (Rev 12:4).

[where the young child was] – Was this Bethlehem or Nazareth? The star appeared when Jesus was born (Matt 2:16). Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to pay their taxes (Luke 2:4). After Jesus was 8 days old, they circumcised him in Bethlehem (Luke 2:21), after 40 days of being in Bethlehem when Mary's time of purification was over (Lev 12:1-4 & Luke 2:22) Jesus was presented in Jerusalem (Luke 2:22). Luke says they went back to Nazareth after that (Luke 2:39), but Luke says nothing of them escaping to Egypt. How do these two accounts harmonize? Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lived in Bethlehem for this period of time for about 2 years (Matt 2:16), which makes sense because it was Joseph's

hometown (Luke 2:3-4). After returning from his escape to Egypt, Joseph made Nazareth his home (Matt 2:23).

MATT 2:10 – When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

[when they saw the star] – When they saw the star stop at the house where the child was, they were happy that they finally got to where they were going.

MATT 2:11 – And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

[the house] – Not the manger (Luke 2:16). This was Joseph's family's house in Bethlehem. Joseph's hometown was in Bethlehem (Luke 2:3-4). Women would leave their family to live with her husbands, which in this case was in Bethlehem. Eventually they made Nazareth their home (Luke 2:39), but not yet.

[the young child] – G3813 = any child from infancy to a more mature child. Jesus was a toddler.

[fell down, and worshipped him] – Worship G4352 They touched their heads to the ground in reverence.

[their treasures] – From Psalms 72:10. All of this was likely used while in Egypt (Matt 2:15). This proves that the astrologers didn't arrive until a year or two after Jesus was born (Matt 2:16). How? Joseph was not a rich man; when Jesus was born he sacrificed two turtledoves (Luke 2:24), otherwise he would have offered a lamb (Lev 12:18). If this treasure was given to him while before they went to Jerusalem for Jesus' dedication, then Joseph would have had enough money to buy a lamb.

[gold] – Isaiah said, people from "Midian, Ephah, and Sheba ... shall bring gold and incense" (Isa 60:6). Gold was given to Kings (1Ki 10:10).

[frankincense] – G3030 = of foreign origin (H3828); incense, frankincense, perfume. Frankincense was used at the altar in worship (Lev 2:1).

[myrrh] – G4666 = apparently strengthened for myrrh (G3464): myrrh - a bitter gum and costly perfume which exudes from a certain tree or shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia, or is obtained by incisions made in the bark: as an antiseptic it was used for embalming. Myrrh was used on Jesus after His death (John 19:39).

MATT 2:12 – And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

[they should not return to Herod] – Because Herod would know where Jesus was and kill him. Likely, Herod would kill the astrologers too. Seeing how they worshiped Jesus in the previous verse, they would have objected to Herod wanting to kill the messiah, resulting in their deaths. Also, Herod would want to silence them and have no witnesses about the matter.

[their own country] – Babylon? Midian, Ephah, or Sheba (Isa 60:6)? Tarshish (Ps 72:10)?

[another way] – They definitely didn't go back through Jerusalem. After a few days of them not returning, the king likely sent soldiers to the way they came to watch for the astrologers to pass through.

MATT 2:13 – And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

[the angel of the Lord] – Probably Gabriel (Luke 1:26).

[flee into Egypt] – SEE MAP OF ANCIENT PALESTINE. Depending on the exact place in Egypt they settled in, the journey could have taken them several weeks to travel with a caravan. They needed to leave Israel because Herod would have looked everywhere to find the messiah and kill him.

Why did Joseph escape to Egypt and not Nazareth? – It's because everyone in Bethlehem knew about the shepherds calling Jesus the Christ (Luke 2:16-18). Someone would have told the soldiers who were killing children that Joseph probably went the Nazareth to escape to Mary's family.

Why did Joseph escape to Egypt and not another country? – It's because it was the only country that they could go to that didn't require them to pass by Jerusalem where Herod was. They would have had to pass through Jerusalem to go to any country north or east. Egypt was south, so it was the best choice. This also proves that they were not in Nazareth at this time because they would have had to travel 110km/80mi or 4 days journey south and likely towards Jerusalem where Herod was to get to Egypt. If they were in Nazareth, it would be more likely for God to tell them to go north to Samaria, not south.

[until I bring thee word] – They were there until Herod the 1st died (Matt 2:15). At the longest, they stayed in Egypt for 8 or 9 years; Jesus was 12 by the time they were back in Nazareth (Luke 2:42).

[Herod will seek the young child to destroy him] – Why would he want to destroy the promised king? It's because Herod did not want to lose power in order for the messiah to gain power and become king. Is there a connection between this and the dragon of Revelation that wanted to eat the child (Rev 12:4)?

MATT 2:14 – When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

[by night] – Showing immediate action after Joseph was startled awake. It makes better sense to understand that he was escaping from Bethlehem rather than Nazareth, since that was the area that was in danger (Matt 2:16). Also, it would have taken 4 days (80 miles) for Joseph to go from Nazareth down past Jerusalem where he was trying to stay away from.

[departed into Egypt] – They started a long journey to Egypt. Likely it took a month to travel this far.

MATT 2:15 – And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

[was there until] – Luke 2:41 says “his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover”, but that was probably after Herod died and they lived in Nazareth. While they were in Egypt, they probably stayed in a Jewish community, just like the Jewish community in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14).

[until the death of Herod] – Herod died In 4 BC.

[the prophet] – Hosea

[Out of Egypt have I called my son] – Quoted from Hosea 11:1, which actually refers to Israel leaving Egypt in Exodus (Ex 12:51). There are many connections here with the book of Exodus.

MATT 2:16 – Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

[mocked] – tricked, fooled... Herod had an understanding that they would return. They didn't. They mocked Herod by not returning.

[slew all the children] – To insure that “the king of the Jews” would die. This shows Herod’s intention from the beginning. Note the similarity with Exodus 1:22 where all male children were killed. Knowing that the messiah was the “Son of David”, it wouldn’t make sense to have the girls killed. Moses did prophesy about a prophet who would come after him (Deut 18:15). This is the only record of this massacre. Not even Josephus, who followed Herod’s life closely, recorded this event.

The sacred Egyptian scribe's prophecy about Moses– Compare this to Jesus’ story: Concerning Exodus, Josephus said that an Egyptian “sacred scribe” foretold that a child would be born from Israel who would defeat Egypt if they didn't prevent it, and that they should kill all the male children (Antiquities 2.9.2; 205-206). In fact, Amram, the father of Moses, was visited in a dream by God, just like Joseph (Antiquities 2.9.3; 212). When the fortuneteller saw Moses at 3 years old, he tried to kill him, but the Pharaoh’s daughter Thermuthis prevented him (Antiquities 2.9.7).

[from two years old and under] – Jesus was probably about 2 years old.

[in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof] – About 8km/5mi in and around Bethlehem. They were in Bethlehem. If they were 130km/80mi away in Nazareth, which was about two years after Jesus’ birth when these children were being killed, how would it have affected Joseph, Mary, and Jesus at all?

[according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men] – The time the astrologers first saw the star was about two years prior or less. That’s why Herod killed all children from two years and younger, because Jesus was about 2 or under at that time.

MATT 2:17 – Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

[Jeremy] – Jeremiah the prophet who prophesied about Israel in Babylon (Jer 31:15).

MATT 2:18 – In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

[Rama] – Rama is about 8km/5mi north of Jerusalem and Bethlehem about 8km/5mi south. Potentially, Herod killed all boys within a 16km/10mi mile radius from Jerusalem.

[Rachel] – Rachel was the wife of Israel/Jacob (Gen 29:28). The mother’s in the land of Israel are compared by Jeremiah to Rachel. Rachel died and was buried in Bethlehem (Gen 35:19 & Gen 48:7), and so was watching and weeping when her children were killed and taken to Babylon, and in Herod’s day when he killed these boys.

[children] – G5043 = child, daughter, son. Translated as child 77 times, son 21 times, and daughter 1 time in 1Peter 3:6. Besides that once, it is always translated “son” as far as gender is concerned. What sense would it make to kill girls when Herod knew the messiah was a male (Isa 9:6)?

[would not be comforted] – Refused to be comforted.

[they are not] – The children are dead and gone.

MATT 2:19 – But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

[when Herod was dead] – Herod died In 4 BC.

MATT 2:20 – Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

[go into the land of Israel] – Why couldn't he just stay in Egypt? Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). It was necessary for Him to escape to Egypt for protection, but also necessary to be with the people He came to save.

MATT 2:21 – And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

[the land of Israel] – Called "land of the Jews" (Acts 10:39), which proves that Jews and Israel were still one people. All the tribes were still known (Matt 19:28, Acts 26:7, & James 1:1). God didn't tell Joseph a specific place in Israel to go to, so where was Joseph going before being warned in the next verse?

MATT 2:22 – But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

[he heard] – As he was traveling into *his hometown of Bethlehem* (Luke 2:3-4), he heard people saying Archelaus was the new king of Judaea and it worried him.

[Archelaus] – [Herod Archelaus](#) was the same person that Jesus met face to face (Luke 23:8).

[he was afraid] – Why was he afraid? Like father, like son; Archelaus knew that his father tried to kill the messiah, and no doubt Archelaus was aware that the messiah might come while he was king. Joseph realized that the current king would also attempt to kill Jesus and probably him and his wife too if the king knew the messiah was around (Matt 2:13).

[to go thither] – To go where? Naturally, he was going to his hometown of Bethlehem (Luke 2:3-4). Bethlehem was just a short distance from Jerusalem where Archelaus was. God never told Joseph to take Jesus to Bethlehem, He only said, "Go into the land of Israel" (Matt 2:20). If there was no king in office, Joseph may have assumed that taking Jesus to Bethlehem was one step toward making him king. After all, Joseph recognized that Jesus was born to be king of the Jews (Matt 2:2 & Matt 27:11).

[warned] – G5537 = to be called, admonished (warned) of God, revealed, advised, consulted, instructed, or commanded. It should be translated "instructed", since it was a little late for a warning. Joseph already knew the dangers of being near Archelaus, and that's why he was afraid.

[he turned aside] – Joseph changed the direction that he was going from Bethlehem near Jerusalem where Archelaus was to Mary's hometown in Nazareth; a place he wasn't afraid to go to.

MATT 2:23 – 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.

[a city called Nazareth] – Not mentioned in the OT. Nazareth is where Mary was from (Luke 1:26-27). Joseph was originally from Bethlehem (Luke 2:3-4), but eventually made Nazareth his home (Luke 2:39). Nathanael said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46), implying that it wasn't a good place.

[That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets] – What prophet(s)? G4396 could be translated as Prophet (singular) or Prophets (plural). In other words, it doesn't necessarily mean that more than 1 prophet said this. There isn't any direct scripture to quote... I've heard 3 explanations that

I will list from what I currently feel are most likely to least likely, but I don't feel right about any of them really. Keep in mind that the scribes thought the messiah would live in Bethlehem (Matt 2:5), not in a town that was never mentioned in the OT before.

1. This prophesy was passed by word of mouth and not by a notable prophet.
2. It's a play on words from Isaiah 11:1 which says the Messiah will be "a branch (netzer)" out of the Jesse's roots. Nazarene = G3480 = Nazōraios, which is kind of similar to "netzer". Also see Zechariah 3:8 that calls Jesus "the branch".
3. "Nazarene" PROBABLY means "despised", since the messiah was going to be despised (Ps 22:6 & Isa 53:3). I have a big problem with this point, because he wasn't despised because He was from Nazareth. In those verses, He was despised while on the cross.

[a Nazarene] – Means, "A person who lives in Nazareth", not a Nazarite (Num 6:2-3). If Jesus was under the oath of the Nazarite, it would be sin to eat grapes or drink wine (Num 8:3), which he did (Matt 26:29, Mark 14:25, & Luke 22:18). Since Jesus "knew no sin" (2Cor 5:21), we should conclude that He didn't take the vow of the Nazarite and break the vow. He also wouldn't be able to cut his hair (Num 6:5).