

The Flight into Egypt and Return – Matthew chapter 2, verses 13 – 22:-

Again we note that this episode is only found in the Gospel of Matthew. It may be that in writing as he does from a traditionalist Jewish point of view, he includes these events so that his readers can connect the miraculous birth and infancy of the Lord Jesus Christ with the ancient prophetic scriptures. Matthew gives direct quotes from 5 different prophets to illustrate his points.

Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14 in Matthew chapter 1, verse 23.

Micah chapter 5, verse 2 in Matthew chapter 2, verse 6.

Isaiah chapter 60, verse 6 in Matthew chapter 2, verse 11.

Hosea chapter 11, verse 1 in Matthew chapter 2, verse 15 and

Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 15 in Matthew chapter 2, verse 18.

Matthew chapter 2, verses 13 – 14:- Joseph for a second time received angelic instruction (compare with chapter 1, verse 20) and took Jesus and Mary to Egypt. It reads as though this took place on the same night that the Magi departed. In Egypt, where there was a large Jewish population at that time, the family would have been made welcome without any undue notice. Joseph, as a carpenter should easily have found work.

Verse 15:- A rather obscure link here with the divine deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt after the slaying of the first-born. The death of the tyrant was the sign of the freedom to return to Judea.

Verse 16:- It may be that Herod's murderous act included no more than a few dozen infants because of the smallness of Bethlehem. It pales into insignificance for secular historians when compared to the other outrages perpetrated by Herod. These included the murder of his wife and three sons. The Jewish historian Josephus calls him "*a man of great barbarity towards all men equally.*" (Josephus; Antiquities xvii, 8.1). "*Two years old and under*" shows that Herod was taking no chances of missing his victim. Jesus was not necessarily 2 years old.

Verses 17 – 18:- The prophecy refers to the wailing at the time of Israel's exile. That calamity eventually brought Herod to the throne and now this new atrocity! Matthew views both calamities as part of the same picture.

Verses 19 – 22:- "*They are dead*", a reference to the persecutor Herod and an echo of the words of the Lord to Moses in Exodus chapter 4, verse 19. Unfortunately Archelaus son of Herod the Great was as brutal as his father. Hence the instruction to Joseph.

Verse 23:- Nazareth seems to have been chosen by Joseph himself within the providence of God. The reference here to "*that which was spoken through the prophets*" does not connect directly to any old Testament prophecy. It would seem likely that Matthew was referring to the prophecies regarding the fact that the Messiah was to be poverty stricken and despised by his contemporaries. See for example Isaiah chapter 53, verse 3, Psalm 22, verse 6 and Daniel chapter 9, verse 26. Nazareth appears to have had negative connotations for the average Jew at the time of the start of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. See the comment of Nathanael in the Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 46.

