

Matthew 2:13-23

Opening remarks – A brief recap of Stewart’s message regarding the visit of the Magi from the East.

We saw last week the three main reactions to the news that the wise men brought to Jerusalem regarding the birth of Jesus.

1. Herod, like a lot of people throughout history and definitely today, reacted with jealousy, rejection and hatred as he tried to destroy all possible competition for the throne. People today want to be the king over their own lives and want no one interfering with what they want.
2. The priests and scribes and other religious leaders showed complete indifference to the news. Here they were with all the knowledge of the prophetic passages of scripture regarding the when and where of the coming of the messiah, and instead of being overjoyed and excited when the wise men brought the news of the star that has led them. They should have been running to go with the magi but were instead so full of themselves that they could not be bothered.
3. The third and of course the proper reaction was the one that the wise men themselves represented. They had been searching the scriptures and they had been watching to see and so they recognized the signs when they saw the star and came expectantly and reverently to worship at the feet of Jesus.

So many people missed it because they were not expectantly waiting and watching and there are so many today in that same condition. {expand on today} Let us be the ones waiting for His coming!

So, we are picking up today beginning in verse 13 and we will go to the end of the chapter. Please stand for the reading of God’s word.
Read Vs. 13-18

PRAY

First 2 slides

Back to base slide

Matthew 2:13-15 - **SLIDE**

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”

Let me just stop here for a second. You know someone might look at this passage and think that Satan really had God on the run here. Like God was playing defense or something. That is so not the case. God was allowing all of this to accomplish the plan that He had set out before the world was ever created. We serve a God who lives outside of time. Our God had already seen all these events play out millennia before they actually happened because He is a God that knows the beginning from the end. The bible tells us...

Isaiah 42:9 - **SLIDE**

Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth, I tell you of them.”

Isaiah 48:5

Even from the beginning I have declared it to you;
Before it came to pass, I proclaimed it to you,
Lest you should say, ‘My idol has done them,
And my carved image and my molded image
Have commanded them.’

John 13:19 - **SLIDE**

Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He.

Back to base slide

Believe me, God was not surprised then, and He is not surprised now. There is not one thing that happened or is happening that God, in His infinite foreknowledge did not already have the plan laid out for. This should be a great comfort to us as believers as we look at the world we live in and we are tempted to think that things are getting out of control for God, we need to remember and really understand that He is sovereign. We see that in detail here as we get back to our text.

Matthew 2:14-15 - **SLIDE**

14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, **15** and was there until the death of Herod, that it **might be fulfilled** which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

{Expand} The scripture that is being quoted here is from

Hosea 11:1 - **SLIDE**

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

and in that context is being used to describe..... The exodus of Israel from Egypt but is also a pictorial prophecy for Jesus/Egypt. You see when the bible tells us that a scripture is relevant in more than one reference, we can just believe it. No guessing needed.

Back to base slide

Now something that stands out to me here is again the immediate obedience of Joseph. We see this as a pattern of Joseph's life. He hears from God, and he acts upon what he has been told. We see it in the last chapter when an angel of the Lord tells him that it is good for him to take Mary as his wife, and to name the child Jesus. Here we see the angel tell Joseph to take Mary and the child and flee to Egypt, and we will see it two more times before the end of this chapter.

In all of scripture we are not really given very much information about the life and experience of Joseph, but what we are told and more importantly what we see in the passages of scripture regarding this man who was chosen to be the earthly father of the Lord and Saviour of the world is truly quite remarkable. (WOW)

We found out in chapter 1 that Joseph was a just man. As pastor Brent pointed out, this word “just” is more accurately translated as

righteous. He was a man that followed the law of God as it was given to Moses. We also see that he was a kind and loving man. He wanted to spare Mary from any public embarrassment when she told him she was pregnant. Even though Joseph must have been feeling confused, betrayed, and hurt by what he would have naturally thought was infidelity on the part of Mary, he was concerned with how she would be looked upon and treated and he wanted to protect her.

This was the natural makeup of Joseph. He was a just man that wanted to do the correct thing and he also wanted to protect his bride to be. This is a true picture of what a godly husband looks like. One that would sacrifice his own needs for the needs of his wife. This is the part that we are told about him. What we see however in the way that he acts is so much more important. His are actions of obedience to God. We see it over and over. God tells him something through a dream or an angel and Joseph has the immediate response of getting up and following through on what he has been told. He doesn't sit around and think about it or talk to someone else and see what they think. He doesn't even think to himself, well, I better pray about this one. No, he understands that he has heard a word from the Lord, and he acts on it. This is the kind of obedience that we as believers in Christ need to have. There are just some things that are so obvious that there is no need to question or to think. Is it a command from God? Does it line up with what we are told in scripture about how we are to live our lives? Just be obedient. Act on God's word to us. I get it, some things that we think God might be asking us to do can require some further looking into, like whether or not you are being called to a foreign mission field or to be a pastor. Most things that pertain to the believer's life however are spelled out clearly in the word of God and we simply need to respond in obedience. Does God want you to tell your neighbor the gospel? YES. Does God want you to serve in the body of Christ? YES. Does God want you to be anxious or worry? NO. He has given us everything we need to know in His word. We just need to be obedient. The freedom that we have in our lives when we are acting and living according to His word is amazing. I love how so many of the promises God has for the believer are written in the past tense. He has already completed these things. **I love how Pastor Brent compared the Israelites taking the promised land compares to us receiving salvation. There is nothing we can do, we just need to accept**

the gift that has been given to us, appropriate the promises and possess the land.

Can you imagine the relief that Joseph must have felt when the angel told him that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He probably didn't understand but he knew that God had spoken, and God had a plan in motion. He knew that the woman he loved and wanted to marry had not been unfaithful and not only that, but she had been chosen to carry the very Son of God into this world. Joseph would have known that he still had a tough road ahead, but he knew the underlying truth of the whole picture and he knew then that any sacrifice on his or Mary's part was nothing compared with the ultimate plan of God that was taking place. Joseph just needed to act in obedience to what God was telling him to do without needing to know the rest of the plan just yet.

So often, that is how God works with us. We are on a need to know only plan. He will reveal His plan to us as we need to know it. Let's face it, if God told us the entire plan all at once we couldn't handle it.

{expand a bit}

Matthew 2:16-18 - **SLIDE**

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."

Back to base slide

Herod was wicked. So wicked that he even had some of his own sons and his wife killed in order to protect his throne from being

challenged. Historic writings tell us that Herod made a list of prominent and popular people that were to be killed on the day that he died. It was said that he was so hated that he knew no one would mourn his death and so by having these people killed he would ensure that tears would be shed on the day of his death. He believed the wise men. And he believed the priests and scribes. He purposefully went against God. Inspired by Satan.

BUT GOD had and has other plans.

Here we see another of the literally hundreds of old testament prophecies that are fulfilled in the life of Jesus. And with this one we get to witness just how amazing our God is as we see the way it is woven together like a beautiful tapestry to reveal a picture that only God could weave.

In Jeremiah 31:15 is where we first see this prophecy spoken about 6 hundred years before the birth of Christ, and it is referring to the grief and anguish that the Hebrew mothers were feeling when their children were taken away and killed in the Babylonian conquest under king Nebuchadnezzar.

Matthew then sees the parallel of this prophecy with another evil king, this time Herod, who in a desperate attempt to ward off any competitors to his throne has all the young boys and babies under two years old killed. And here we have again another prophecy that relates to two different events separated by hundreds of years.

The next thread we see in this tapestry is the mention of Rachel and of Bethlehem. You might remember that Bethlehem is first mentioned in scripture in Genesis 35:15-20 when Jacob is returning to his own land after being gone for many years. The bible tells us there that Jacob and his wives, children and the rest of his entourage were not quite to Bethlehem when Rachel went into labor. The short version of the account is that she died in childbirth while having Benjamin.

Before she died, she named the child Ben - Oni which meant "son of my sorrow" and Jacob later changed the boy's name to Benjamin which means "son of my right hand." Both of these names prophetically relate to Jesus in that He is described in Isaiah 53 as "a man of sorrows acquainted with grief" and in Acts chapter 5 He is

described as our Prince and Saviour seated at the right hand of God. So here we have a reference to Rachel, one of the mothers of the tribes of Israel, dying just outside of Bethlehem where Jesus the messiah of not only the Jews, but the messiah of the whole world was born.

Only our God could take all these things and bring them together like this. And this is also just another example of why you must read and understand the old testament in order to discover how it is revealed in the new testament.

Matthew 2:19-23 - **SLIDE**

19 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, **20** saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” **21** Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. **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.”

Back to base slide

Boy, Joseph must have been on a first name basis with this angel he had seen him so often. The angel had told Joseph that he was to stay in Egypt until he brought him word about the next step in the plan. Wow, wouldn't that be a great deal? If you could have an angel map out your big decisions? Well maybe if you were in charge of taking care of the Son of God but for all our normal human sized problems and decisions, He has given us His word. Anything we will run across in our lives is covered within the pages of this book, God's bible. Joseph however, {and I take some personal liberties here} even though he was clearly a man of God who walked according to the law,

was still a man and could have messed up a decision or two so God was taking every opportunity to make sure that Joseph knew the correct when and where of the plan.

So, Joseph is given the green light to head back to Israel because Herod had died and so he packed up and took young Jesus and Mary and headed back. It is the angel that visits Joseph again and redirects him to the Galilee area specifically to Nazareth. This again is to fulfill prophecy. Interestingly as we mentioned Herod had killed most of his sons but had left Archelaus and his brother alive and had divided the kingdom between them. He was so narcissistic that he thought if he divided the kingdom then neither son would have the power or prestige that he had held. Archelaus however was just as wicked and as the historic writer Josephus put it he had "all of the cruelty of his father with none of the greatness" So Archelaus was ruling in the Judea Jerusalem area but his brother Herod Antipas, who it was said was much more even tempered was ruling in the Galilee and so God directs Joseph there. So, Joseph and Mary really end up full circle as they end up back in Nazareth where they were when they became betrothed together and where Mary was first given the news that she was to become the mother of the God man, Jesus Christ, the messiah of the world.

As I prepare to close here today, I want to bring to your attention something that really struck me as I was studying for this message. We know that God has shown us in His word that there are what seem to be patterns or foreshadowing events that have taken place that are similar in circumstance to events that come later. One of the things that I see that relates to something I want to remind us a church about is the fact that whenever there was a slaughter of innocent children, God moved in mighty ways.

When Moses was born, the Pharaoh had given an order that all of the Hebrew babies were to be surrendered and killed because he feared that the numbers of the Hebrew people were getting too large and there was a chance of rebellion and uprising by the slave force that they had been used for.

What came out of this was that God saved Moses by using the daughter of that same Pharaoh to raise the child in the royal palace that He (God) would use to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery and bondage and into the promised land.

Then we have here the murder by Herod of the innocent children in his attempt to kill the prophesied Messiah. And out of that we have the entry into this world of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who was to die that sacrificial death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. In this way He (Jesus) was leading the way for us to enter that promised land of salvation.

That brings me to what we see in our world today. We see the massive slaughter of innocent babies through the government sanctioned murder of the unborn through abortion. The number of children being sacrificed on the altar of self-appeasement is unprecedented in all of history. We see so many so-called reasons people give but it all comes down to "self" this is just not the right time for me to have a baby. Whatever the excuse God is brought to anger and proclaims that there will be judgment upon this sin. We read in Jeremiah where God is explaining to the people why they are about to be conquered and taken into captivity by the Babylonians that this is one of the main reasons.

Jeremiah 32:35 - **SLIDE**

And they built the high places of Baal which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.'

So, God in His perfect righteous judgment will bring His wrath against a world that would commit what the bible calls an abomination and I believe that day is rapidly approaching. It seems to me, by the pattern we see in God's word that this destruction of life was kind of a line in the sand for God. Whenever this would happen God moved. I believe that the next move of God is that Jesus is coming back to retrieve His bride the church and pour out His wrath upon an unbelieving and unrepentant world.

Do you know what I love though? God is so merciful, and He is ALWAYS ready to forgive and to restore when people come to Him in repentance. We see in the very next verses in Jeremiah the promised restoration to the people of Israel.

Jeremiah 32:37-41 - **SLIDE**

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. **38** They shall be My people, and I will be their God; **39** then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. **40** And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. **41** Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.'

God gives us His example of grace, forgiveness, and love. He tells us that if we are repentant and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of sins. He will restore us to a right relationship with Him.

Now many of you know that here at Riverside Calvary Chapel we are a House of Refuge. Some of you may not know what that means, and I will explain it. We began this ministry last mother's day and we will remain committed to it for as long as the need exists.

READ THE HOUSE OF REFUGE STATEMENT

The House of Refuge Statement

Riverside Calvary Chapel is a House of refuge; This applies to everyone in this church or people you know that need a place of refuge.

Here is what we believe:

if you find yourself in an unplanned pregnancy, please know that being pregnant is not a sin, and the child you carry is not a punishment; it is a blessing. God is knitting this child in your womb. You may have made a sinful decision that led to this pregnancy, or you may have even been sinned against, but we want you to know that you are loved, and we will do whatever it takes to help you carry and care for this precious child before and after birth.

We can never support or encourage a woman to have an abortion because this child you carry is made in the image of God and is intrinsically valuable and loved by God. You need to know how we will respond.

Here's what we won't do:

This church family will not gossip about you, shame you, or abandon you. This is a House of Refuge, and we will not allow for the family of God to harm one another with words or actions contrary to the love of God as revealed in his word.

Here is what we will do:

We will do everything in our power to remove whatever obstacles may stand in the way of you having this child. There are people in this church ready to mentor you, throw you a baby shower, and to connect you with resources both inside and outside of our church. Resources such as local pregnancy care centres, and if required, adoption agencies.

We will also hold men accountable for living out their calling to provide and protect women and children.

Finally:

If you have ever had an abortion in your past, we want you to know that abortion is **not** an unforgivable sin. Whoever confesses and forsakes their sins finds both forgiveness and mercy. If you have never gone through a post abortion Bible study, we will be happy to connect you to one so that you can walk in complete healing and freedom and find the RESTORED life in Jesus Christ that is promised in His word.

So church, as we wait for the return of Jesus, we are to occupy as the body of Christ and be light and salt in the world we live in. One of the truly most important things you can do is to pray. And don't only pray against the evil of abortion but pray about what God would have you do actively do in the battle.

Joan and I recently had the blessing.....{EXPAND} - **PRAY!**