

1.

Introduction

1.

Illustration: Prodigal Son

1.

In Jesus' parable of the Prodigal son, though the prodigal son wasted his father's inheritance and no longer deserves any honor, his father sees him coming a long way off, runs to him and throws a celebration because once his son was lost, but now he is found. If there is anything you should see in the passage before us today, it is that same loving heart of God the Father.

2.

3 Scenes, 3 Fulfillments, but 1 Story

1.

In this passage there are 3 scenes and 3 fulfillments, but only 1 story. Throughout there are many echoes of OT events in which God had a special hand.

2.

Each scene ends with a fulfillment of OT prophecy, a fulfillment of God's plan. In the first and third scenes, Joseph receives a command, then obeys it. In the second scene, murderous King Herod is contrasted with poor, faithful Joseph and the Almighty God who is his aid.

3.

Outline. The three scenes bring out three themes which we do well to remember. First, God's Protection in vv. 13-15, second,

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Man's Destruction

in vv. 16-18, and third, tying the first two themes together,

The Messiah's Rejection

in vv. 19-23. Each scene should draw you to praise our God for the overarching theme of His fatherly love

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1.

God's Protection vv. 13-15

2.

Man's Destruction vv. 16-18

3.

The Messiah's Rejection vv. 19-23

4.

Body

1.

God's Protection vv. 13-15

1.

Text. In vv. 13-15 we learn first of God's protection. God protected Jesus from being destroyed by Herod.

1.

13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream

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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." 14 And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt 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."

2.

God's Command

1.

We hear of God's command, Joseph's obedience, and the prophecy's fulfillment. Christ's time had not yet come to appear on the public stage of history, to stand before kings or die for your sins. In God's wisdom He planned a way out of the danger posed by Herod through the means of the angel's message in a dream, both informing Joseph of the unseen danger and providing its ready solution, sending Joseph, Mary and Jesus to flee to Egypt, in fear for their lives. Before Christ was born they had few earthly possessions of their own to comfort in distress, but now they have little to weigh them down, the gifts of the wise men to pay their way, and the reassurance that God would tell them when it was safe to return—not to mention that they have within their small band Jesus Himself, who was born a Savior, Christ, the Lord. God will protect His people

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2.

Joseph's Obedience

1.

If you have ever wondered whether Joseph was a faithful believer, you need not wonder any more. Joseph's obedience to God's frightening command is unquestioning, immediate, and faithful to the end. He went out of Israel like Abraham left his homeland, "not knowing where he was going," but he went, because he believed God. (**Heb. 11:8**)

2.

The Fulfillment

1.

God's great acts of saving His people. God intentionally planned Jesus' life to remind us of God's great acts of saving His people in the past so that we would recognize "the hopes and fears of all the years are met" in Jesus Christ. This is not the first time that a Joseph was forced out of the promised land to go to Egypt in danger from his brothers. Yet it was in Egypt that God transformed that former Joseph from an outcast and slave into a prince and the savior of God's people. And what is more, it was in Egypt that God preserved the Hebrew sons from Pharaoh's decree that the midwives put male children to death, and that every male child of the Hebrews be cast into the Nile. It was in the Nile of Egypt that God preserved Moses in an ark of bulrushes so that one day He would lead His people out of Egypt to worship Him in the wilderness. And when Pharaoh sought to kill God's firstborn sons, God sent His angel of death to kill the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Even the firstborn son of Pharaoh. But God passed over the sons of His people who were covered by the blood of the passover lamb. And so God said, "The firstborn sons are mine."

2.

The Prophecy

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Text. And so in Joseph and Mary's desperate flight to Egypt, God protected His people again. This is God's amazing plan! At the beginning of the Exile God reminded His people of this plan in the words of **Hosea 11:1**

quoted in our passage

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

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Now "Egypt" is Judea. You could be confused by this prophecy, but you should not be. You could wonder whether Matthew takes it out of context, because Jesus fled

to
Egypt, not
from
Egypt, in our passage. But the fact Jesus flees
to
Egypt should remind you of the time when God rescued His people
out of
Egypt, and bring you to recognize that here the child Jesus flees from a new Pharaoh and a new Egypt which is not located in the literal land of Egypt. Rather, the Egypt from which God rescued Jesus is Judea, and Herod is its Pharaoh.

-

An Ironical Reversal. This reversal of Egypt's role is ironic. While in Moses' day Egypt was the place of idolatry, slavery, and cruelty to the sons of Israel, now God makes Egypt a refuge for His Son. Now Israel has become the place of idolatry, slavery, and cruelty to God's Son. Because God loved His people Israel and saved them from the evils of Egypt, in Hosea God warned them that they had turned away from God their Father. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, and also if you don't, God's warning to Pharaoh is now a warning to you:

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Ex. 4:22

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22 Israel is my firstborn son, 23 and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.

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God will protect His people.

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Christ Represents Us. The way God protects His people is indicated when He calls us "my son.

" If you are one of God's people, you belong to Him and He loves you as He loves His own Son. What is more,

Jesus Christ, God's firstborn Son, represents you

. Though God has

adopted

you, you are not God's

second

son. God told Pharaoh, "

Israel is my

firstborn

son.

"

Jesus Christ represents you

. Before God's eyes, Christ's blood covers your sin because you are so united to Christ as your Savior that He lives in you, and you live in Him. In Christ, you are God's firstborn son. God protects you through Christ your Savior, because Jesus Christ represents you before God the Father.

-

And so when Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to save Christ from the clutches of Herod, God protected your Savior, and God protected you. Have confidence today, saying "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.

"

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Man's Destruction vv. 16-18

1.

Text. In vv. 16-18 we learn of man's destruction. Herod will stop at nothing to preserve his power and glory, and destroy the Kingdom of God.

1.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

2.

Herod's Wrath

1.

We see Herod's wrath, Herod's command, and even amidst this evil, the fulfillment of prophecy .

2.

In his wrath Herod stands as the agent of Satan, whose mission is to "steal, kill, and destroy, " even though Christ came that we " may have life, and have it abundantly.

" (

John 10:10

) In

Rev. 12:4

John writes, "

And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

"

3.

Herod's Command

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1.

Its wide scope. From his wrath flowed Herod's command. Notice what large measures Herod took.

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As to time Herod directed that all children two years old and under be put to death.

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As to place he directed that all male children in Bethlehem and that region be put to death.

-

Its injustice. Though the wide scope is not surprising since Herod acted out of desperation, murdering so many infants is a heinous injustice! All were guilty through Adam's transgression and so liable to die for their sin, but they had committed no sin against Herod, and some of these children were children of believing parents, so this was their martyrdom and these were the first martyrs in the New Testament.

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Its call to action. Herod's wrath should remind you that the Lord calls you to face man's evil destructive bent if you are a follower of Jesus Christ.

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In others. He calls you to suffer for his sake at the hands of others. Jesus said in **Matt. 10:38-39**

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38 Whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

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In yourself. Jesus also calls you to face your own destructive bent and repent of your sin. Herod's anger came from the same source as does yours and mine. It came from the evil desires within his heart, which themselves are set on fire by the pit of hell. Can you see in Herod's wrath that " The anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires "?

J

(
James 1:20

)
Instead, it leads to destruction. "

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

" (
Proverbs 14:12

) "
Wide is the gate and easy the way that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many....Narrow is the gate and hard is the way that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

" (
Matt. 7:13-14

)

-

Its good result. Although Herod meant this murder for evil, there is a way God used it for good. If Herod did succeed in killing all the children in Bethlehem, then only Jesus survived. Because the star had indicated the time of Christ's birth, and OT prophecies the place, none but Jesus could claim to be the promised Messiah.

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The Fulfillment. Herod's maniacal murder of innocent children, however evil, was a fulfillment of God's plan which He revealed through His prophet Jeremiah.

1.

The background. In the days of Jacob, Rachel had already died, but Jacob mourned when his sons by Rachel—Benjamin and Joseph—went down to Egypt and he thought they had been

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lost forever, and Genesis repeats the phrase several times that they " are no more.
"

2.

The prophecy

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In the days of Jeremiah, God promised His people they would mourn the loss of their children in the tribe of Benjamin in this same way again during the Exile, but afterward they would be comforted.

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Jer. 31:15

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15 Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." 16 Thus says the LORD: "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. 17 There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country."

-

Its OT fulfillment. This is exactly what happened in Jer. 40. During the Exile, God's people were again sent out of Israel and those still in the land felt God's exiled people were lost forever. But afterward during the Restoration God did bring His people back to the land, including their children.

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Its NT fulfillment. This is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ in a greater way than He has ever done before. In the region of Benjamin and the vicinity of Bethlehem, where Rachel had been buried, God's people mourned at this evil which man's sin had brought upon the land of Israel, that their beloved children "are no more." Though during Christ's exile they mourned, after Christ's restoration to the land they would rejoice. Now the promise of salvation through faith in Christ is "for you and your children" (

Acts 2:39

), we receive God as our Father and the whole church as the family of God, and we look for the "better country" of the New Heavens and the New Earth.

The Messiah's Rejection vv. 19-23

1.

Text. And the way we would come to no longer weep for the loss of our children was for God to give up His only Son. In vv. 19-23 we see God giving up His Son to what we can call the Messiah's rejection

1.

19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." 21 And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. 23 And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."

2.

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God's Command & Joseph's Obedience

1.

As God promised, He again gives Joseph a command, and again Joseph's obedience is prompt and sincere.

2.

One greater than Moses. The angel's words echo what God said to Moses after Moses had fled from Egypt.

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Ex. 4:19-20

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19 And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead." 20 So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

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Thus God engaged Moses in the work of redeeming His people from Egypt, and in this same manner God sent His Son on the mission to redeem His people from their bondage to sin. In Jesus Christ, One greater than Moses is here.

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The Fulfillment

1.

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The Quotation. In God's providence and by His direction in a dream, Joseph and Mary did not return to Bethlehem, but rather to their hometown of Nazareth, in Galilee. Matthew tells us this fulfills what was spoken by the prophets that "He shall be called a Nazarene." Matthew doesn't name which prophet spoke this prophecy, and in fact there is no passage in the OT containing the words Matthew quotes. The reason for this is that Matthew isn't quoting the prophets' words, but rather, their message. Their message was that the Messiah would be rejected by men. The Messiah's rejection is the combination of man's destruction and God's protection.

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2.

Nazareth. Nazareth's significance comes from the way it ties together a number of OT themes. You could think that each theme is unrelated to the others, and so we must choose only one theme which explains Nazareth's significance. Many commentators follow this route. However, all the themes are related through the root word *nezer*, which means to be separate, whether for honor or dishonor, for holy use or vile.

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Joseph. This root word is applied to Joseph in the OT when he was separated from his brothers for dishonor, but in the end, for honor, making him a prince among his brothers. (Gen. 49:26; Deut. 33:16)

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Nazirite vow: Samson. It is from this word the Nazirite vow derives its name, in which a person separates themselves for holy use. Samson was a Nazirite of this sort, and he became the Redeemer of his people through the strength of the Lord.

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Branch. When God described Christ as the "righteous Branch" in Isaiah (4:2; 11:1; 60:21), Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15), and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12), he used this word to indicate Christ is separate from Israel's unholiness, that He is exalted above Israel's kings, and is the "shoot from the stump of Jesse, a branch from his roots"

" (

Is. 11:1

); the promised son of David.

-

Nazareth. Nazareth's name contains this root word as well. Small and protected, a city set on a hill but in the hills, in the country, Nazareth was a town separated from others for dishonor, so Nathaniel asked, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (**John 1:46**) Through God's design Christ could say of Himself the words of His father David in **Psalms 69:8**

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I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

-

Christ's death on the cross.

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In Christ's death on the cross, His separation for dishonor through man's destruction, and His separation for honor by God's protection, come to a climax. While Christ was suffering on the cross he quoted parts of Psalm 22, which also says,

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Psalm 22:6-7

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6 I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

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7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

-

8 "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him!"

-

Truly Christ "was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

" Through the

Messiah's rejection

and crucifixion by the hands of sinful men

,

The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

" "

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

" As our passover lamb He was led to the slaughter, so that all who believe in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

-

Like Rachel's children, the Son of God "was cut off out of the land of the living," "10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days.

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"

(

Isaiah 53

)

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

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Because Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, man's destruction and the Messiah's rejection

have come into the plainest view, but at the same time,

God's protection

is displayed more fully than ever before. And what is more, "

God shows his love for us

in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

" (

Rom. 5:8

) The prodigal son's father ran to meet him when he came home, but even more than that, God has come to the far country to which you have run, and calls you out of its life of sin to make you His son through the death of His Son on the cross. Now you should know "

that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called

according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also

predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son

, in order that he might be the

firstborn among many brothers

. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things?

If God is for us, who can be against us

? 32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things

? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ

? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36

As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' 37

No,

in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

" (

Rom. 8:28-37

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