

**Matthew 2:13-23**  
"Listening To God's Leading"

How much we can learn from the magi of Matthew Ch 2. Obedient to follow the "light" they'd been given; there was no price they weren't willing to pay, no distance they weren't willing to travel, no inconvenience they wouldn't overcome for a moment spent at the feet of Jesus.

& For all they endured, for everything they went through, when they finally found themselves His presence, we discover that they didn't pursue Him so diligently, so desperately so that *He* might bless *them*, but so that *they* might bless *Him*. They didn't seek Him so as to *gain* something, but so as to *give* something, not to *consume* but to *contribute*, not to *receive* but to *worship*. & They worshipped Him lavishly, extravagantly & sacrificially...

I think if we were to be honest we'd have to confess that there are times we worship the Lord w/ulterior motives. It's like you may not make coming to church a big priority but when a major decision is coming down the pike it's like, "I need to get there & worship the Lord, I need to hear *from* the Lord." Or "I got bills to pay, so I'm gonna worship this way! 😊" **Maybe we're down emotionally or dry spiritually so we worship the Lord in hopes of being rejuvenated & refreshed inwardly... Now that's not to say there aren't blessings to be found in worship, absolutely there is. But our motive in finding ourselves on our faces before the Lord shouldn't be self serving, "I need something here so I'll humble myself *before* You & bring my praises *to* You."**

We're to worship the Lord because He is the King of kings, He's the Creator of all things, He's the source *of* life, the reason we *have* life, He's the Beginning & the End, the Lily of the Valley, the Fairest of 10,000, the Bright & Morning Star. He's the Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd, The Prince of Peace, our Savior... **Knowing Who He is what He's done should be more than enough *information* & all the *motivation* we need to worship Him. Our question shouldn't be, "What can *You* do for *me*?" It should be truly, "What can *I* do for *You*, my King, my God, my Savior?" "How can I bless *You*?" For, **"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."**<sup>1</sup>**

When we last left off we were noting that the Magi came into His presence one way, but they left another way. Such is always the case when we encounter the Lord, you may enter His presence one way, but you'll leave His presence another...

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<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Re 4:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's interesting that for all that time, effort, energy & money they'd spent, they got what seems to be an opportunity to see Jesus *once* & that was it. The psalmist cried (Ps 84) that 1 day in His courts is better than a thousand anywhere else. How far will you go to pursue the presence of Jesus?

They'd come down from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, but being divinely warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country a different direction.

### Vs 13-15

So check it out; no sooner than the Magi departed, an angel of the Lord appears to *Joseph* in a dream saying, "Listen, it wasn't enough for *them* to leave, *you* need to disappear as well because Herod is going to seek the young Child so as to destroy Him, so wake up your family & go down to Egypt & stay there till I bring you word that it's safe to return."

Few things we want to draw out of this section of scripture. #1 We know that the scripture teaches that Jesus wasn't a man of means, nor did He come from a family of means. As a matter of fact when Mary & Joseph went to the temple to dedicate the Lord as an infant they brought w/ them the most meager sacrifice the law would allow for, a pair of pigeons. They just didn't have much money.

I say that to say this, when you're told to pull up stakes & move to a different country & to leave immediately, taking nothing more than you can carry personally & you don't have any money, how could they possibly have afforded not only to move there, but to settle there for any amount of time (finding a place to live, getting food, basic necessities etc)? Well, it's interesting isn't it, the day before they had to leave they received a special delivery of significant value. They were gifts of gold, frankincense & myrrh. As to where 2 days earlier such a command would've been practically impossible to obey, now Joseph had the means to pay for the costs of the journey, to take care of them while they were in Egypt, the whole trip was just financed.

We have a phrase that we use (perhaps you've heard me say it before), "Where God guides, God provides." Joseph didn't have a savings account built up, he didn't have a retirement plan he could dip into, the provision came at just the right time so that they were enabled to do what the Lord had led them to do & go where He directed them to go.

How many of you have come to discover that God has perfect timing? Whatever the need may be, if God is guiding, God will be responsible for providing. It doesn't mean we sit back & do nothing, but it does mean we trust in the Lord w/ all our heart & lean not on our own understanding. But in all our ways we acknowledge Him & He will direct our paths.

The bible is replete w/examples of God guiding & God providing. Most readily my mind goes to the Exodus, God guiding the children of Israel out of Egypt, providing for them along the way. Precious treasures as they left, parting the waters of the Red sea providing a means of escape, guiding them to freedom. Guiding them in the wilderness, providing water to drink, manna to eat. God was *guiding* them. Therefore He was responsible in *providing* for them.

Every impossibility for man becomes opportunity for God, to show Himself strong on their behalf, to glorify Himself in making a way where there was no way...

Something else I want you to take note of here is Joseph's *immediate obedience* to the instruction of God's Word. There was urgency & Joseph responded immediately. He didn't wait for the sun to rise, he & his family disappeared under the cover of night. Listen, this was not by any stretch convenient for him, believe me when I say this wouldn't have been easy for them but he didn't sit around and make excuses, he got up & got to work.

How many of you have discovered that obedience to the word of God is not always easy nor is it convenient? Jesus never said that His way was the easy way. Quite to the contrary He said, *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*<sup>2</sup> He exhorted us that we "count the cost" in following Him... He said, "Foxes have holes, birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." What He was saying was that following Him isn't easy. It isn't a primrose, problem free journey. Paul said, *"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*<sup>3</sup> Joseph just left his trade (had to quit his job) didn't really know what he would do once he got to Egypt. But the Lord was faithful to guide them, provide for them & God honored his obedience.

Think about this, Joseph was instrumental in saving the Savior. I wonder what the reward looks like for the man who was willing to forsake all to save the One who would save us all? (Never underestimate the eternal ramifications/rewards in obeying the Word of God.) It looked like trouble & turmoil in *this life*, however I promise it meant unfathomable reward in the next. Again Mary gets a lot of attention (& rightly so, she is certainly blessed among women), but Joseph gets overshadowed, let's not forget that they were a package deal.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 7:13-14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Ac 14:22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Could it be (at least in part) that God chose Mary knowing the kind of man/dad/godly leader Joseph would be in/for that family? He didn't allow difficulty to defeat or discourage him from obeying the word of God wholly & from the heart. He didn't *talk* about doing it, he *did it* & we all sit here today thanks to his due diligent obedience.

Perhaps you're thinking, "Well if God spoke to *me in a dream* I'd obey to!" God has done you one better, He's put it in black & white, He had it written down. Listen, why would He instruct us further if we don't even act on what we have? We want to be entrusted w/more when so often we're not faithful w/what we have...

So we're learning some things here. #1 Where God guides God provides (He's faithful). #2 When God gives us His word we should obey immediately & w/out hesitancy. It's as if lives depend upon our right response to the Word of God. **I don't need to remind you that in this world we're living in (as believers) hostile territory, we have an enemy whose aim is to murder you, he's not out to annoy you, he's out to destroy you & all you hold dear. It's vital that we respond immediately & w/a sense of urgency to the instruction of God's word. ---**

Herod's response to Jesus is consistent w/his character personally & w/the heart of humanity generally. Think about it, when God dwelt among us in the Person of J.C. Before He ever uttered a word, performed a miracle or made a decree, there was a certain section of humanity trying as hard as they could to kill Him. John said that like this, **"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."**<sup>4</sup> **Jesus came as the light of the world, but men love darkness rather than light & will not come to the light because their deeds are evil. So rather than come to the light, they seek to snuff out that light...**

Something else to see is that Joseph didn't question God. He didn't say, "C'mon God, wouldn't it just be easier to give Herod a heart attack, or an aneurism or something?" No, he simply (despite the difficulty) obeyed. **He wasn't all, "Well, I guess I gotta move, so long career, it sure is tough being a believer", poor me syndrome. He just did what God told him to do. Just like the Magi, they heard the word & obeyed, allowed their lives to be guided & governed by obedience to the word, Joseph was a doer of the word of God, not a hearer only. (Write it down, look it up later Matt 7:24-27) Joseph's house was founded on the rock.**

In Vs 15 Matt demonstrates for us how that Joseph's being led *into* Egypt that he might later be led *out of* Egypt was also a fulfillment of scripture (Hosea 11:1) "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 1:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now when you read Hosea 11:1 it's obvious that it's a reference to the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt (historically). But here Matt gives us a greater insight demonstrating how that even as Israel was called out of Egypt by God nationally, it would foreshadow (prophetically) His Son, (Jesus) being called out of Egypt Personally.

### Vs 16-18

Again the words in Jeremiah referencing the carrying off of the southern kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity around 586 B.C. Jeremiah informs us that Ramah (about 5 miles north of Jerusalem) was the deportation headquarters at that time. So Rachel (one of Israel's wives) is seen symbolically representing all the mothers in Israel. & Even though Jeremiah wrote of that event initially, here Matt tells us that it's ultimate fulfillment was found in this event specifically.

It's as if Herod took a map & drew a circle around Jerusalem from Ramah to Bethlehem & said, "Kill every male child in these districts 2 yrs old & under. Now even though 1 child was too many, don't think of a massacre of epidemic proportions (as though thousands were slain). Those who study such things (like understanding the population of those areas in those days) tell us that more than likely it would've been probably around 20 children or less. But for a man who had a significant portion of his own family (his own children) put to death due to his paranoia, don't think that he'd lose any sleep having your children put to death if he felt threatened in his position.

But again you guys, it's as I was mentioning earlier. The bible says that Satan came to steal, to kill & to destroy. Jesus tells us (Jn 8:44) that the devil was a murderer from the beginning. Jesus came to *give* us life, Satan wants to *destroy* your life.

Now as sort of a sub-point (observation if you will) Moses told the children of Israel (Deut 18) that God would raise up a Prophet like him from their midst (a reference to the Messiah). One whom God would raise up to be a deliverer to the nation, freeing them from bondage (not of slavery to Egypt but to sin). There are *many* parallels in the life of Moses & in the life of Jesus... Here are a few. Both Moses & Jesus were born in times in which the ruler of the people was acting in a paranoid fashion. They were both in danger of being murdered as infants, they both found divine protection in Egypt & of course they both came up out of Egypt.

Oh Btw, last week I shared w/you the fact that we believe that Jesus was perhaps a year old maybe a little more when the Magi showed up & I told you we'd demonstrate how we come to that conclusion as this Ch unfolds, well here it is.

Remember back in Vs 7 when Herod secretly called the wise-men to himself & determined from them exactly when they saw the star? He wanted to figure out exactly when Jesus was born. & Now that he realizes that the wise-men weren't coming back to tell him exactly where they found Him, he launches operation clean sweep & rather than take any chances on missing Him, he simply commands that *every* male child 2 yrs & under (based upon the time calculated from the appearing of the star) be put to death.

So if Jesus was maybe 1 ½ old, Herod said, "Just to be sure I'm ordering that every male child, 2 yrs & under (in these regions) be put to death.

### Vs 19-21

Obviously we see here God continuing to lead Joseph & Joseph continuing to obey unreservedly. Now as for exactly how long they were in Egypt we don't know. Some say a few months, others a year or 2, there's no real way to know.

What we do know is that Joseph was told to go, he went, he waited, when he got word he left. I've discovered that there are times that God will tell you *what* He's going to do, but He won't tell you *when* He's going to do it. Meanwhile (like Joseph) we're to wait. But here's the question, are we open to the Lord interrupting our lives? Here he was, seeking to make a living when seemingly out of the blue the Lord instructed him to leave his job & make this radical, perhaps even risky move. But isn't that how God works? Oh He may not tell you to leave your job tomorrow (though He might), but it's in His nature to direct us to take steps of faith, to follow His leading, to do things that seem radical, maybe even somewhat risky.

Here's Joseph, leaves his job, relocates to Egypt, starts settling in & suddenly he gets word again, time to go! We say it occasionally, but understand as believers, God owns the "editing rights" to our lives. He can break in here, change that there, take us a different direction anytime He deems it necessary. & It's not uncommon for Him to lead us in a way that left to ourselves we never would have gone...

### Vs 22-23

If there's anything we can say about Joseph it's that he's certainly a model of listening to God's leading. We can't say w/certainty but more than likely he was headed back to Bethlehem or maybe even on up to Jerusalem. I mean hey, your foster Child is the Son of God, the King of kings so perhaps Jerusalem would be the place to live!

But then you discover that Herod's boy Archelaus is ruling that area (he's just as bad if not worse than his dad) & so you think, "Wait, maybe we should pray over this, seek the Lord on this."

Then God ministers to you that you're not to be living in that area & so he heads on up north into the area of Galilee back to Mary's home town (presumably his as well) Nazareth. It was the brother of Archelaus, Antipas who was over that region, he was much more competent & less paranoid.

But think about this, this was the place where everyone knew Mary's business (or at least thought they did; so many times what people think they know, they know nothing of). Yet God ordained that His Son should grow up in this little village, this little unwalled, unprotected & otherwise despised community.

Remember when Phillip spoke to Nathaniel of finding the Messiah & said it was "Jesus of Nazareth"? What did Nathaniel say? *"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'"*<sup>5</sup> This was the reputation that proceeded the town of Nazareth, yet it's where Jesus grew up. **Think of the county, or city that you've always made fun of, or thought less of & have used maybe as a joke when you're speaking of the people from that region... That's where Jesus came from.**

& It seems that's what Matthew had in mind when he says here in Vs 23, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" Because there's no specific Vs in the OT that says that, however Matt doesn't name a specific prophet, or place it's to be found. **He mentions "prophets" because it's found over & over again in the OT that the Messiah would be a Man despised & rejected, a lowly Man of humility who would identify w/the needy.**

Believe me no one was intimidated to meet a man from Nazareth; the tendency would be to immediately think one's self better than a person from Nazareth. Yet this is the title that Jesus chose for Himself, to identify Himself eternally, "Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 22:8).

Closing thoughts... Joseph must've been beginning to understand that things weren't going to unfold in his life in any way, shape or form like he thought they would. His plan was to get married, have a family & live happily ever after. Then, it all changed. "I'm going to parent the Son of God..." Maybe he thought he'd be rich, or admired, perhaps even the envy of the neighborhood, suddenly he's fleeing for his life, living in Egypt, back in Nazareth... living under the shadow of speculation & contempt...

**Ladies and gentlemen; God's ways are not our ways, & we need to realize that the bible teaches in no uncertain terms that believers are not exempt from trials.**

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 1:46]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet we also see the importance of listening to God's leading & realize that the safest place we can possibly be is in His will, wherever that may lead.

Guys, Joseph was instructed 4 times, 4 times he obeyed. This is man who heeds the word of God. & From his family would come James (the 1<sup>st</sup> overseer of the church), Simon who was right in there as well, Jude (whom we have his letter in our bibles)... Dad's step up, honor God's word, listen to & obey His word, it will have an affect on your kids & make a difference in their lives.

God will honor your obedience, it will bless those around you presently & God will be glorified & reward you eternally. Amen? Amen.

### Prayer Points:

God once again we want to just thank You for Your Word. We ask God that You would help us to be faithful & obedient to what You *have* revealed to us before we worry about You revealing something *more* to us. May we listen to Your leading, be willing to obey you instantly, w/out hesitancy & may we honor You fully.

God You have the right to break into our lives at any point & lead us a way that we never saw coming. May we not question You, but simply obey You that You might be glorified in our lives.

Listen, if you don't know J.C. You've never surrendered your heart to the Lord, He wants to break into your life right now. God loves you, Jesus shed His blood & died for you upon the cross that you might be forgiven of all your sin & made new in Him. Turn from your sin today, believe on the Lord J.C. & you'll be saved. Oh you're not being called into an easy life, you're being called into eternal life. This world is not our home. We'll be at home when we're w/the Lord, until then we're to honor Him, serve Him w/our lives.