

Faithless World, Faithful God

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Matthew 2:13-23

Series: King of Kings

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Matthew**. We are in a series through the book of Matthew entitled: “King of kings!” Today’s message is entitled, “Faithless World, Faithful God”.

Proposition: I want us to be encouraged to exercise our faith in a faithless world.

Do not trust in your circumstances. Trust in the God who controls the circumstances. In Matthew 2, the Apostle Matthew presents to us the drama of redemption. There is always both worship and warfare. He brings us to four different places to demonstrate that though all the powers of hell break lose in this faithless world, we have a faithful God that sent His Son into this world to save us.

The Apostle Matthew wants to show us that the whole Old Testament is pointing us toward the true salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Context: Worship and War

The context for Jesus’ birth and early childhood are the same as we face today. There is both worship and war. The circumstances reel back and forth like an ocean wave, but God still remains the Almighty, unchangeable, unstoppable God. He is our faithful God. He will bring about redemption regardless of the enemy’s onslaught. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

This morning I want us to journey to four places that picture our redemption:

- Bethlehem: from humility to glory
- Ramah: from exile to home
- Egypt: from slavery to freedom
- Nazareth: from obscurity to monarchy

We are going to see a journey to glory, a journey to home, a journey to freedom, and a journey to Christ’s Lordship over us.

Matthew 2 (ESV), “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

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

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.”

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, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.”

I. Bethlehem: from humility to glory (2:1-6).

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

Micah 5:2

Bethlehem: Population 300

Though Bethlehem had only a population of 300, the glorious king would be born there. This is the ancient prophecy of Micah. We learned in chapter 1 he would be a virgin born king! But in Bethlehem?

Enter the Prophet Micah

The prophet Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries. Micah was active in Judah from before the fall of Samaria in 722 BC and experienced the devastation brought by Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 BC. He prophesied during the time that Sennacherib’s Assyrian army came against Judah and 185,000 Assyrians were slaughtered in one night by the angel of the Lord. What a victory!

A Greater Victory

But there would be a greater victory that takes place in a little town called Bethlehem. The humble Savior would be born!

The Wise Men Worship, Herod begins War

In verses 7-12 of Matthew 2, the wise men worship while Herod begins to war against our great Savior. Herod wants to kill him.

The War from the Dark Side: Revelation 12

There is a war going on and Herod is just Satan’s puppet. If you want to see what is really happening behind the scenes, turn over to Revelation 12. It’s a behind the scenes look at the kingdom of darkness at this time.

Revelation 12:1-6 (ESV), “And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun [ISRAEL], with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars [TWELVE TRIBES]. 2 She was pregnant [WITH CHRIST] and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon [SATAN], with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. 4 His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it [BY HEROD]. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne [AT HIS ASCENSION], 6 and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.”

Herod is a Maniac

Enter Herod the king. I meant to tell you something here. King Herod is an absolute maniac. He's someone that cannot be trusted.

The Bethlehem Way

Herod's way is not the Bethlehem Way. Herod uses brute force to get his way. He is like a terrorist with a license. He is a very dangerous man.

God's way is the way of humility. 1 Peter 5:5

II. Egypt: from slavery to freedom (2:13-15).

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

Worship Short Lived

The worship of the wise men was short-lived. No sooner had the magi **departed** than **an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream**, giving him a warning from God.

Herod's Lies

Herod must have thought he was being very clever when he asked the Magi to come back after they had found the child so that he could "go and worship him" too. He had no intention of doing that. Instead, he wanted to murder this apparent usurper to his throne.¹

There are many circumstances where we do see the future. We do not know what is in the hearts and thoughts of people who may want to do us harm. We can be sure of this – God loves and protects his people. If you are in a place where you are insecure in your life, I want you to know you can trust Him.

No Weapon

God protects His people. **Isaiah 54:17**, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper". If you want to see the context that Matthew quotes, it is Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt I have called my Son".

Flee to Egypt

From *pheugō* (to **flee**) we get our word *fugitive*, one who escapes from something or someone. The word is here in the present imperative. Joseph and his family were immediately to begin fleeing, and were not to stop until they were safely within **Egypt** and beyond the reach of Herod.

¹ Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (39). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Alexandria, Egypt – a Safe Place

It is likely that the holy family went to Alexandria Egypt where there was a population of over a million Jews at that time. This is a trip of about 300 miles.

Where did they get the money? The gifts that the wise men gave, specifically the gold likely financed their journey there.

Enter the Prophet Hosea

So Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son”.

- **Matthew 2:14-15**, “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.”

Seven centuries earlier God had told Hosea that “out of Egypt I called My son” (Hos. 11:1). Herod’s threat was no surprise to the Lord, who, long before Herod was born, had made plans to foil that wicked king’s plans against the true King. The reference to “My son” in the book of Hosea is to the nation Israel. It was a historical statement about what God had done in delivering His people from bondage under Pharaoh, calling them out from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.²

Jesus, Our Ultimate Moses

Jesus is our ultimate Moses. He is the one who rescues His people. This is a way of looking at prophecy as a type. The final and true redemption from this world would not be through Moses, but through the True Moses, our Lord Jesus Christ. He would bring His people out of bondage.

I Will Give Nations for You

Matthew calls our attention to the Exodus. God never leaves his people under the evil tyrant.

Remember Isaiah 43:4 (ESV): God says...

Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.

Are you in Bondage?

Are you in bondage to sin? It is Christ alone that will deliver you. Someone told me recently, “If you are not satisfied with Christ, nothing will satisfy you!” :

Now we turn to another place on our Old Testament journey: Raymah.

III. Raymah: from exile to home (2:16-18).

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

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (42). Chicago: Moody Press.

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.”

Herod is Ruthless

Herod was ruthless. Herod had always been ruthless, but in his later years, he was especially terrifying. He murdered his favorite wife, Mariamne, had her two sons strangled, and, as a last act of his long and violent career, had Antipater, another son, executed for promoting himself too precipitously as his heir.³

Augustus Caesar

Caesar Augustus once said of Herod, it would be better to be one of Herod’s swine than one of his sons. Herod was a gentile pretending to be a Jew, and so he would not eat pork. So it is sad that this monster treated his swine better than his own sons.

The Slaughter of the Innocents

So Herod slaughters the children 2 years and younger. With a population of 300, theologians estimate Bethlehem would have had between 12 and 20 children that age. So basically we have the equivalent or worse of the Sandy Hook Killer as the Governor of Judea.

In an age of atrocities, the murder of these children would have been merely one additional cruelty but sadly this was not a particularly striking one at that.⁴ Herod would stop at nothing to keep his throne.

Herod’s Death

Verse 19 speaks of Herod’s death. Herod’s death was horrific. It is said that his bowels were filled with worms. He died an excruciating death. Josephus also stated that Herod was so concerned that no one would mourn his death, that he commanded a large group of distinguished men to come to Jericho, and he gave an order that they should be killed at the time of his death so that the displays of grief that he craved would take place. Fortunately for them, Herod's son Archilaus and sister Salome did not carry out this wish.

Raymah: The Exile

The Apostle Matthew brings our hearts and minds to Raymah. He quotes Jeremiah 31, and he gives hope in the midst of awful tribulation.

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Rachel's Children

Rachel was Israel (Jacob)'s first love. He had two children by her. Rachel cries from her grave so to speak in Jer. 31 as Jeremiah describes the exiles being taken away into Babylon.

But no nation or tyrant can stop our salvation.

Romans 8:31, "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. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Raymah: The Round up of the Exiles

This is the round up place for the exiles of old. Yet nothing can separate us from Christ's love. Nothing can keep us in exile. Nothing can keep us bound in Ramah.

IV. Nazareth: from obscurity to monarchy (2:19-23).

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, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene."

House of Obscurity – Neztar – the Branch – Isaiah 11:1 – Hebrew play on words. Jesus is the obscure little twig. Though he wasn't a physical Nazirite (he drank wine and touched dead bodies-to raise them) He was the true "Holy One of Israel". He is the Nazarene (shall anything good come out of Nazareth?). He is the man of sorrows – the unrecognized Savior. He lives on the cusp of the Gentile lands. He is in obscurity and brings us out of obscurity. Jesus is an outcast who saves the outcasts.

Conclusion: God's Word and God's promises to you are faithful. Do not put your trust in the circumstances of your life to help you. Put your trust in the God of the circumstances. In a faithless world, we have a faithful God!