

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas  
January 1, 2023  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
Matthew 2:13-23

### **A Savior Born to Be the True Son**

#### **Matthew 2:13-23 (EHV)**

*After the Wise Men were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, because Herod will search for the child in order to kill him."*

*Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod. This happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."*

*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Wise Men, he was furious. He issued orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside, from two years old and under. This was in keeping with the exact time he had learned from the Wise Men. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:*

*A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*

*After Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. The angel said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to kill the child are dead."*

*Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, had succeeded his father as ruler in Judea, he was afraid to go there. Since he had been warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee. When he arrived there, he settled in a city called Nazareth. So what was spoken through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."*

Dear Friends in Christ,

The EHV Study Bible says this about the Herods: "The story of the Herod family has all the ingredients for a great soap opera."<sup>1</sup> There are multiple men who go by the title of King Herod in the Bible. Herod Antipas executed John the Baptist. He married his half-brother's wife who was also his niece. Herod Agrippa I executed the apostle James. Herod Agrippa II was part of Paul's trials before Paul was sent to Rome. And it all started with Herod the Great, the first Herod mentioned in the account from Matthew today. He had ten wives. He had his favorite wife and several of his sons killed to protect his place as king. These were cruel and ruthless men, especially Herod the Great. I don't think many people would want to be a son of Herod the Great or any other Herod. They did not care for those they ruled or love their family more than their power. They certainly did not care what God said.

And God sent his true Son into this soap opera world of the Herods, into a world of sin and evil. The true Son of God came into this sinful world to suffer alongside his people and to suffer for all people. And this was God's plan, for the true Son of God fulfills every prophecy.

### **The True Son of God Fulfills Prophecy**

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<sup>1</sup> EHV Study Bible, 2127

Some of the best evidence for the Bible being true is predictive prophecy being fulfilled. What the prophets of the Old Testament wrote happened centuries after they wrote it. Matthew points to three prophecies being fulfilled by the events in this account before us today.

*Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod. This happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."*

Hosea first wrote these words about the people of Israel being called out of Egypt. In addition, the Lord was speaking through Hosea to predict that his true Son would have to spend some time in Egypt. We heard the familiar prophecy of Micah recently that predicted where Christ was to be born, in Bethlehem. God also predicted where his Son would flee from Herod the Great, to Egypt. These are small details for God to tell ahead of time through the prophets. These small details give us confidence even today that Jesus is the true Son of God who came to be our Savior.

The second prophecy fulfilled is a grim one:

*When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Wise Men, he was furious. He issued orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside, from two years old and under. This was in keeping with the exact time he had learned from the Wise Men. Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*

Jeremiah wrote about the women who wept when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and assembled the Jews at Ramah for deportation. These women were weeping like Rachel who had died giving birth to Benjamin not far from Ramah, in Bethlehem. Now, the women of Bethlehem were in great mourning because of the evil Herod had inflicted upon all in the area by having his soldiers kill all the boys who were just infants and toddlers. God knew this was going to happen. He gave the words to Jeremiah about this event centuries before it happened. We could ask why God would allow this and why he didn't stop such evil. But hold that question for now. At this time, focus on the fact that these events are fulfilling prophecy. Every detail is happening just as God foretold. Jesus is the true Son of God.

The third prophecy fulfilled is an interesting one.

*After Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. The angel said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to kill the child are dead." Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, had succeeded his father as ruler in Judea, he was afraid to go there. Since he had been warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee. When he arrived there, he settled in a city called Nazareth. So what was spoken through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."*

We do not have the passage in the Old Testament that prophecies that the Savior will be from Nazareth. However, Matthew writes that God spoke this through the prophets, plural. It may have been passed down through the generations orally and not written down. But it is another amazing detail. The true Son of God will be born in Bethlehem, live in Egypt, and be raised in Nazareth – all predicted by the Lord through his prophets. All fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true Son.

### **The True Son of God Suffers**

Matthew has clearly established Jesus as the promised Savior and true Son of God. He recorded the genealogy of Jesus in chapter 1 and then told us the story of Christ's birth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He is Immanuel, God with us. The wise men visit in chapter 2 and bring gifts to worship the newborn King of the Jews, showing that Herod was not the rightful king and certainly

not the true Son of God. In the verses before us today, Matthew showed us three more prophecies fulfilled to show us Jesus as the true Son.

Now we ask ourselves a question. Why would the true Son of God, pure and holy, come down to this soap opera world? Since the fall into sin this world has been anything but pure and holy. It is filthy with immoral living and public rejection of everything God has commanded. This world is evil and violent and full of hate, jealousy and greed. Compared to the perfect world God created, sinful humans have turned everything into a manure pile. Our own wicked thoughts, sinful actions and evil words have only added to the pile of filth. Why would the true Son of God want to come into this world of sin? Why not stay in the perfection of heaven and keep himself from contact with the unwashed masses?

God's plan was for his true Son to suffer along with us in this sinful world. Jesus was born in humble circumstances and was not sheltered from the consequences of sin in this world. Yes, his heavenly Father made sure his earthly stepfather took him to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. But that meant waking a young child, no more than two years old, and fleeing with his mother in the middle of the night. They were true refugees, fleeing from a cruel ruler across international borders in search of safety.

Once they are able to go back, Herod's son is ruling, and he is not much better than his father. So, they go to Nazareth. One would think that the true Son of God and heir to David's throne would grow up near Jerusalem, the most important city of the Jews. But he grows up in Nazareth. One of his own disciples said out loud what many thought of Nazareth. "Nazareth, can anything good come from there?"<sup>2</sup> Pilate had a sign attached to Jesus' cross that added the insult of being from Nazareth. "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

When Jesus grew up, he lived among tax cheats, adulterers, religious hypocrites, liars and thieves. He touched those sick with disease that others ran from. He spoke with and ate with those shunned by polite society. He got down into the mess that is human life to save as many as possible.

You see, the true Son of God did not wait until this world improved before he came into the world. He came when the time was right and that happened to be when a wicked king named Herod ruled Judea. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus does not wait for us to improve our lives before he comes to us? The true Son of God comes to us when we are neck deep in our own filthy sins and see no way out. He came to be the way out. He comes to us when we are weak in faith to comfort us with his forgiveness. He comes to us when we've strayed like lost sheep and calls us back to himself to be fed and protected by our Good Shepherd.

And we can be certain that Jesus does this for us for he did not turn away from the shame and pain of the cross. All that was prophesied about him came true. He suffered and gave up his life to forgive all people, to cleanse us from the filth of sin and to give us eternal life.

Whatever you are going through in this soap opera life, your Savior understands. He's been through it all too. He will be with you through it all and keep you in the true faith in the true Son of God to the very end of the ages.

Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> John 1:46