

Lesson 2: Chapter 2 “The wisemen’s visit-The flee of the Holy family to Egypt”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscopts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_02.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview and please refer to the introduction part; located under lesson 1.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson was an introduction for the book of Matthew and the genealogy of Jesus, listed in chapter one.

We also studied about how St Joseph reacted when he knew about St. Mary’s pregnancy then God intervened and changed his plan to dismiss her, he was told to take her as a wife because her newborn is the son of God.

Memory verse:

2:6 *“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah.*

For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people, Israel.’ ”

Lesson opener:

Ask: Imagine a friend asking the magi before their departure. Where are you going? We don’t know. How far is it? Not sure about that either. How long will you be gone? Emm. That is yet to be determined. “Wow, for wise men you guys don’t know very much, do you?”

The wise men didn’t have a lot of facts in front of them. They didn’t have a lot of proof. But they believed. They saw the star and they knew it was a sign from God announcing the birth of Christ. They probably knew the Scriptures. They probably knew what the prophet Daniel had said about Him as he lived in Persia which was where they were from. They could have considered this to be the star mentioned by Balaam, in Numbers 24:17. They believed the Christ was born. They were willing to sacrifice comfort and security to see and worship Him. Why? Because of faith.

Traveling at that time was far different than it is today. They couldn’t just jump into a car or hop on a plane and set out and arrive later that day. Traveling was a lengthy, weary, and dangerous activity because the mode of transportation was probably camels, not the fastest way to get around. They would need to often stop and

resupply. It was also uncomfortable. Sometimes when we travel on a plane we complain because the seats are a bit too close together and there is not enough room for our legs. Yet there is air conditioning, padded seats, reclining seats, attendants to bring water, food, and adjustable lights.

Did you ever ride a camel? Can you imagine how uncomfortable it is? hard seat with no padding, and bumpy rides. The weather would at times have been very hot and at times quite cold (desert weather varies greatly). There would be storms. Maps were incomplete. Roads were not well developed. And there were a lot of thieves and bandits around. It was also a journey of unknowns. All they had were some promises and a star. But they believed. And so, they set off following their faith.

Lesson Goal:

God is our deliverer. He will rescue us and help us when we are in trouble. All we need to do is to put our trust in Him. He delivered Joseph and Mary from King Herod, and He will deliver you and me from our enemy, Satan. It is wonderful that the Lord is our rock, our fortress and our deliverer.

Lesson body:

The magi visit Jesus (Read 2:1-12)

- ❖ Bethlehem means: " House of bread. " Jesus Christ would go on to be called: "The Bread of life", John 6:35
- ❖ After a long journey (they probably arrived when Jesus was about 2 years old), they finally arrived. Their action was very simple. They fell to the ground and worshiped. These great men who were full of wisdom and knowledge of every kind prostrated themselves on the ground before a young child. Their actions showed humility and great faith.
- ❖ Although it is commonly taught that the Wise men were three in number, there is no Biblical documentation for that assumption.
- ❖ They offered Him **incense** as their God and represents His priesthood; **gold** as their king; and **myrrh** represents suffering.
- ❖ The trouble of Herod is easily accounted for viewing this baby as a danger to his own throne, around whom the Jewish nation would rally. He asked the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin answered without hesitation. They made it very clear that they knew all about the prophecy of where the Messiah would be born. This prophecy is found in Micah 5:2 in which both the place of His birth and the character of the Messiah are so clearly set forth that there was no room to doubt. **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From ^{the} everlasting."** Micah 5:2.
- ❖ He doesn't threaten the magi or torture them for more information, hiding his real intentions. Instead, he feigns genuine interest to make himself appear as their friend so that he can learn as much from them as he can.

Jesus' family flees to Egypt to escape Herod (Read 2:13-23)

- ❖ An angel warns Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus because Herod seeks to kill the child. They stay there until Herod's death, fulfilling the prophecy, **"Out of Egypt I called My**

Son." And again, Matthew does not spare a chance to mention prophecies throughout his gospel to prove his point that Jesus is the Messiah.

- ❖ Herod directed the wise men to report to him after their visit to Bethlehem, but they had a dream to go a different route. Their return to their own country without complying with his wishes seemed to Herod a mockery of his authority, and excited his rage because his plan was to find Him and privately dispatch Him: and now he might fear, which increased his wrath, that the child would escape his hands, and in time be set up for king, to the prejudice of him and his family; wherefore, to prevent this, if possible, he placed an order to slay all the young children in Bethlehem two years and under.
- ❖ This fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah, *a voice heard in Ramah, Rachel weeping for her children*. The prophet describes Rachel, the mother of two great tribes, as weeping and refusing to be comforted. Within half a mile of that city was the tomb of Rachel, and the prophet applied her weeping to the inconsolable mothers of Bethlehem, as though Rachel that slept in the tomb, were a mourner over her slain offsprings. PS: our Coptic Church celebrates the commemorations of the children of Bethlehem on the 3rd day of Tobeh which is January 11th : According to Ft. Tadros Malaty; They represent the church of the New Testament, which carried the simplicity of the Spirit first like children do.
- ❖ After Herod's death, an angel tells Joseph it's safe to return to Israel. However, because Archelaus (Herod's son) reigns in Judea, they settle in Nazareth in Galilee. Notice that St. Joseph is not required to return to Bethlehem or to Judea, but simply to the land of Israel.
- ❖ This fulfills the prophecy that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. **“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.”** This passage has puzzled Biblical scholars since there is no clear text in the Old Testament which states the Messiah would be called a Nazarene → However unlike the other quotes, which refer to what is by "the prophet," this passage does not refer to a single prophet but to "what had been spoken through the prophets," plural; and therefore, Matthew may not be referring to a single text but to a larger theme in the prophetic texts.
- ❖ The word “Nazareth”, or “Nazarene” is a Christian title in Hebrew it is Natzar which means a branch.
- ❖ Zech 6:12) “Here is a man whose name is branch, for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord”. This is why the Jews expected the Messiah to be called the ‘Branch’ or ‘Nazarene’.
- ❖ Who is Herod? He was a born Adomite in whose blood was enmity towards the Jews. He had no right for kingship but had become one over Judea with the help of the Romans with whom his father made an alliance. He was violent and unusually strange, and in his last days he was exposed to hallucination. He was a blood thirsty man and killed a big number of the Jewish members of the Syndicate. At his last breath he ordered the death of all the great ones on Jerusalem so that grief overcomes the city, and the new king would find no way for happiness. But he died before that last wish took effect. Herod died three months later after putting Bethlehem’s children to death. The Jewish historian Yousifous described how his ferocity in his last days was so awful that he ate meat in incredible amounts and was sick with gout and other diseases.
- ❖ Why has the Lord Jesus fled to Egypt? [Ref: Fr. Tadros Malaty pg.22]
 1. The flight to Egypt is only one part of the chain of suffering St. Joseph joyfully passed through.

2. The flight of the Lord Jesus from evil confirmed the truth of his incarnation.
3. His flight as a representative for humanity offers us a spiritual program that has the basis of not resisting evil by evil.
4. Egypt was the head of gentile world. In the Old Testament, it pointed with its Pharaoh to slavery, and with its fertile soil it pointed to a life of luxury and love of the world. The Lord could have resorted to a city in Judea or in Galilee, but He wished to sanctify the land of Egypt to establish in the midst of this Gentile land an altar for Him.

Takeaways and lesson delivery ideas:

1. Joseph obeyed without delay:

When commanded by the angel, Joseph was to get up and go to Egypt. But there were great challenges to obeying this. Jesus was a baby or a toddler. The trip to Egypt was well over 100 miles. And they likely had to make the walk on foot and with a young child. For those of you who travel with little children know it is difficult. Normally a family wouldn't even consider making a trip like that. If they did, they would probably want adequate time to prepare. They would want to say "goodbye" to their friends and family and pack up for the road.

But notice that Joseph left in the middle of the night. He did not roll over in bed and decided to get just a couple of more hours of sleep. Instead, he got his family together and threw some stuff in a bag and then started walking while it was still dark.

We too are given many commands by the Lord. We are commanded to seek His kingdom first. We are commanded to build up treasure in heaven. We are commanded to use the gifts He has given us for building up the church and glorify Him. Sometimes these things may not seem as urgent as the command to Joseph, but they are urgent, and they are also very important.

2. Mary and Jesus had to obey too:

Not only Joseph obeyed, Mary and Jesus did too. Jesus was a baby or a toddler at the time, so he didn't have much choice. But some 2-year-olds would surely throw a fit at being woken up in the middle of the night and starting on a journey. Mary too had to obey. She did not have the same dream Joseph had. She hadn't been given command directly from the Lord. Her husband woke her up in the middle of the night and said, "We need to go to Egypt. I had a dream." A lot of wives would not believe that. A lot of wives would argue. A lot of wives would want more time. They would need time to prepare. But Mary is a great example of Godly submission.

3. God did not miraculously deliver them from difficulties:

Joseph and Mary faced a lot of difficulties on their path even as they sought to obey God. Their baby was born in a stable. They were forced to flee their home in the middle of the night because the king wanted their child dead. After that, they would then have to take a long and dangerous journey to a foreign country and live for years in a culture they were not familiar with. And yet some people teach that if you obey God your life will be smooth and easy. They teach that God will make His follower's life prosperous. They teach that if you believe something enough then God will give it to you.

Those who teach such things ignore the very clear teaching in the Bible that even those who faithfully obey Him face trials/difficulties/persecutions. God never promises to give an easy life to His followers. In fact, He promises just the opposite. Mary and Joseph were the parents of God's own son. If God had ever desired to protect any family from facing any difficulties, one would think that He would want His own son's family to have an easy life. But He didn't choose an easy life for Jesus. So, what does this mean for us?

Application: Some people will lose faith when they face trials. These people may think that the trials are evidence that God is not with them or does not care about them. But God cared about Mary, Joseph and Jesus. And they still faced trials. Do not get discouraged when you face trials. Do not lose faith. Do not think that life is unfair. And do not compare yourself to others who may face fewer trials than you. Instead, let the life of Jesus strengthen your faith. Remember that even though Jesus and His family faced trials, God protected them during those trials. And God will also preserve His plans for you and your future even in the midst of the trials you face.



Review questions if needed:

<https://biblehub.com/questions/matthew/2.htm>