

The JOURNEYMEN

"We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it to you: come with us, and we will do you good..."

-- Numbers 10:29

Book Study – Matthew 2:13 – 2:23

The Escape to Egypt – The Return to Nazareth



Before We Begin Our Journey...

1. What are the pros and cons of fierce competition and rivalry?
2. What was your most frightening brush with death?
3. What do you like most and least about your hometown?
4. Why is it so difficult to move to another place?



Do Some Digging and Pre-planning...

5. In your own words, explain what is happening in this pivotal verse. (2:13)
6. Why was it necessary for Joseph to take his family and flee? (2:13)
7. What was King Herod's emotional state when he realized the Magi had tricked him? (2:16)
8. What orders did King Herod give in an attempt to eliminate his competition? (2:16)
9. Where were Joseph, Mary, and Jesus at the time of Herod's death? (2:19)
10. What did the angel tell Joseph to do and what was the reasoning behind the command? (2:20)
11. Another dream, another king, another place to call home... This is not easy. Why? (2:22-23)



Sort it Out, Organize It, Gain Some Understanding...

12. What is it about competition that makes us feel so threatened?
13. What is the best response to "rivals" or "opponents"?
14. How has your hometown influenced who you are?
15. Does God ever "lead" people to change their residence and if so, why might God "lead" you to live in a certain area?
16. How important is obedience to God's will in the decision-making processes of our lives?
17. How do we know God's will? How do we make decisions based upon "doing God's will?"



Application for the Journey...

18. In what area of your life do you need to trust God more instead of being driven by competition?
19. What very specific action can you take this week to begin to "know and understand the will of God?"
20. What specific act of kindness can you do this week for a new family in your neighborhood?

A prayer for your journey...

"Lord Jesus, as I walk through this coming week, help me prepare for my journey by reading my Bible more regularly, seeking help as I need it from my Christian friends and focusing on the needs of others instead of myself. Help me to demonstrate my faith by stepping into the unknown, untried, and untested areas of my life." -Amen



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Flight to Egypt

According to Matthew, when the Magi came to Herod the Great in Jerusalem and asked where the newborn "King of the Jews" was, he became paranoid that the child would become a threat to his throne, and sought to kill him (2:1-8). Herod initiated the Massacre of the Innocents in hopes of killing the child (2:16-18). But an angel appeared to Joseph and warned him to take Jesus and his mother into Egypt (2:13). Matthew is repeatedly careful to describe Joseph only as the husband of Jesus' mother, rather than as Jesus' father.

Egypt was the logical place to find refuge, as it was outside the dominions of King Herod, and throughout the Old Testament it was the standard place of exile for those unsafe in Palestine. At the time in which the story of the flight is set, both Egypt and Palestine were part of the Roman Empire, making travel between them easy and relatively safe.

Matthew's account is the only biblical reference to this flight, although there are many traditions about it reported in the New Testament apocrypha. Matthew gives little detail about Jesus' family's time in Egypt, but there are a number of apocryphal tales filling in this period. These stories of the time in Egypt have been especially important to the Coptic Church, which is based in Egypt. Throughout Egypt there are a number of churches and shrines that claim to mark an area where the family stayed. The most important of these is the church of Abu Serghis that claims to be built on the place the family had its home.

The Books of the Apocrypha

The English-language King James Version of 1611 followed the lead of the Luther Bible in using an inter-testamental section labeled "Books called Apocrypha". It included those books of the Vulgate and the Septuagint which were not in Luther's canon. These are the books which are most frequently referred to as "the Apocrypha". They comprise the following:

1 Esdras	2 Esdras	Tobit	Judith
Rest of Esther	Wisdom	Ecclesiasticus	Baruch & Epistle of Jeremy
Prayer of Manasses	Song of the Three Children	Story of Susanna	The Idol Bel and the Dragon
1 Maccabees	2 Maccabees		

Many modern Protestants point to the following four "Criteria for Canonicity" to justify the selection of the books that have been included in the New Testament:

1. Apostolic Origin — attributed to and based on the preaching/teaching of the first-generation apostles (or their close companions).
2. Universal Acceptance — acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the ancient world (by the end of the fourth century).
3. Liturgical Use — read publicly when early Christian communities gathered for the Lord's Supper (their weekly worship services).
4. Consistent Message — containing a theological outlook similar or complementary to other accepted Christian writings.

The basic factor for recognizing a book's canonicity for the New Testament was divine inspiration, and the chief test for this was apostolicity. The term apostolic as used for the test of canonicity does not necessarily mean apostolic authorship or derivation, but rather apostolic authority. Apostolic authority is never detached from the authority of the Lord.

Galatians 1:6-9 Paul said this in the most extreme terms:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel, which is no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we [Paul and his apostolic band] and an angel [an angel from the throne of God] from heaven should preach any other gospel than the one we've already preached to you, let them be eternally condemned. As we have already said, so now say again, if anybody, anybody at all, preach to you a gospel other than the one that we preached to you and the one you already accepted, let him be eternally condemned.