



## **Matthew 2:19-23**

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” 21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father

Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

## **Reflection**

As we just read Herod's death. Historians tell us it happened painfully, of natural causes, and that he was 69 years old when he died. And after redrafting his will at least seven times, he split his kingdom between three of his sons: Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip. Archelaus features in our passage today. You'll remember from our last passage that Jesus has fled with

his family to Egypt, as a homeless refugee with a price on his head. Today we read that as Herod has died, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream, for the third time, and lets him know that 'those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.' Herod's dead, and so it's safe to go back to Israel. And so Joseph takes his family back to Judea, probably heading back to Bethlehem, it had been less than a year so perhaps they could re-establish some kind of life there.

But then, for the fourth time, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph to warn him. It turns out that Archelaus, Herod's 19 year old son who took power in Judea, is a chip off the old block, just as cruel and ruthless as his father. And so Joseph, instead, takes his family to a town called Nazareth

in Galilee where one of Herod's other sons, Herod Antipas ruled, who apparently had a slightly milder temperament.

And so Jesus and his family were called out of Egypt by God, and settled in Nazareth in Galilee, and from that point on Jesus would be known as Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Nazarene.

Two things stand out in our passage today. The first is this, again Matthew appeals to the prophets. This is the fifth time in two chapters – not to count all the other references implied in his language. Despite Jesus' shockingly humble origins, it's almost unthinkable, God's King and Messiah born in a stable, but despite these humble origins Jesus' birth and early childhood fulfill what was predicted about the coming

of God's anointed one, the Messiah, the rightful king of the Jews and the Saviour of God's people and of all mankind. Jesus is the one, and fulfilling all the prophecies proves it.

Taking just a quick look at one of them, remember we read in chapter 2 verse 16 the prophecy from Hosea 11:1 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' In today's passage we see God, calling Jesus, through his angel, out of Egypt to Israel. You might remember in the Old Testament that God used Moses to deliver the Israelite nation out of the hands of the Egyptians and to lead them to the Promised Land. But now someone greater than Moses is here. Moses spoke about Jesus when he said that God will raise up a prophet like himself from among Israel. And now the one Moses spoke about is

here. Moses was born a prince in a palace, Jesus was born a prince in a stable. Moses was used by God to deliver God's people out of slavery to the Egyptians and on to the Promised Land. Jesus was used by God to deliver the whole world out of slavery to Satan, sin and death and on to the eternal Promised Land of heaven. Someone greater than Moses is here.

And God through Moses called the whole Israel nation out of Egypt. Israel, in the Old Testament was often referred to as God's sons. Here, God calls Jesus, his son, out of Egypt. Matthew is showing us that Jesus is Israel reduced to one. One man, bearing the burden of the nation, one man about to live the life that Israel should have lived, but failed to live. Israel reduced to one, living the life that Israel should have lived,

and dying so that not just Israel might live, but dying so that all the nations might have the opportunity of entering the eternal Promised Land, entering heaven.

The second thing that stands out in our passage is that it says in verse 23 that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. And he was. He became known as Jesus of Nazareth, or Jesus the Nazarene, and in Acts they call some of the earliest Christians members of the 'sect of the Nazarenes.' Now you have to understand, Nazareth was nowhere. Think of the worst suburb or town that you know of, the butt of everyone's jokes, the furthest place from the tracks on the wrong side of the tracks – that was Nazareth. In John 1:46, Nathanael, who became one of Jesus's disciples, when he heard that Jesus was from Nazareth

he couldn't help but say aloud,

‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’

And so whenever we hear people say ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ in the gospels we have to understand that they’re mocking Jesus. They’re heaping scorn on him. Just like prophets like David, and Isaiah and Daniel had said they would. They’re reminding anyone in earshot that Jesus is from a deadbeat town in the middle of nowhere. Remember that back then it wasn’t what you did that counts like it is today, it was where you came from. And Jesus came from the worst of towns. Think trailer park, think caravan park, think a housing commission estate, or government housing ... that’s where Jesus came from. And he nev-



er left. Deliberately. Jesus was taunted all his life because of his hometown but far from trying to escape it he embraced it. He never crossed the road to avoid a homeless person. He made time for everyone that society had cast aside: time for children, time for the poor, time for sick people, time for handicapped people, time for the elderly, time for prostitutes, and immigrants, and sinners.

## **Think & Pray**

How about you? If Jesus could make time for people like these, how about you? Jesus didn't spend all his time trying to climb up the social ladder, he stayed at the bottom rung, because there are more people there. And far from wasting his life, far from not living up to his potential, Jesus went

on to be the most talked about figure in the history of humankind – not to mention also being the Saviour of the world.

Challenging isn't it? Stepping down to become great. Slowing down to become great. Challenging isn't? Resisting the urge to follow our culture and stop at nothing to leave behind some of the people that most desperately need to hear the good news of Jesus. Stop for a moment now and consider the magnitude of where Jesus came from, heaven to Nazareth, and who he spent the majority of his life ministering to. What might this mean for your life if Jesus wants you to take up your cross and follow him? And then pray this over with God. Ask him to fill you with wisdom by his Holy Spirit and to make you wise to use this day and the rest of your days in

the way he would have you spend them.