

## Episode #703 Matthew 2 Part 4: The Return to Israel

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Last time we saw the blessed family’s flight into Egypt from Herod and the terrible slaughter of Herod of the helpless children of Bethlehem. The Lord watched over the blessed family in Egypt, and after Herod met his deserved end, He sent them word through another dream to return to the land of Israel.

### III. The Return to Israel.

- A. Verse 19. After Herod’s death an angel of the Lord communicates with Joseph in a dream in Egypt, the third such dream he has had. There is no telling just how long this was, but it was probably a couple of years only. The Lord did not grow up in Egypt. They might well have gone to Alexandria, where there was a very large colony of Israelites. This flight and return were no doubt financed by the riches the wise men had brought them. Did they have much left afterwards?
- B. Verse 20. The command is to go into action to return to the land of Israel. Why? The enemies who sought the young Child’s soul are dead. There was only really one enemy, Herod, so this may be a figure of speech, or Herod’s men included.
- C. Verse 21. Joseph again shows that he knows how to obey what he is commanded to do. Notice again the Lord is described as a young Child.
- D. Verse 22. Archelaus = Prince of the People, a son of Herod the Great by the Samaritan woman Malthace. He became ethnarch over Judea, Samaria, and Idumea after his father’s death. He was forced to flee after his people went to Rome and accused him of being a tyrant. Notice he did not reign over Galilee, where God informed Joseph he should go. Galilee means “Circuit,” the region in northern Israel from Samaria to Syria and from the Jordan River to Pheonicia. It was on a major trade route so more cosmopolitan than Judea, but since the temple and the religious life of Israel were in Judea it was looked down on by the Judeans.
- E. Verse 23. Nazareth means “The Guarded One.” Luke tells us it was their home prior to Mary’s pregnancy, and remained their home after the census until the flight to Egypt, Luke 2:39. Joseph may have considered moving back to Bethlehem before the angel warned him not to. This “fulfilled” is even more strange, since this is never found in the Old Testament. Has something dropped out? Bullinger points out that things “spoken” by the prophets need not necessarily have been written. Lenski points out Nazareth was a place with a disreputable reputation, John 1:46, despised by Hiram, I Kings 9:11-13, so Matthew means His coming from there is in line with what the prophets said about the Messiah being “despised and rejected,” Isaiah 53:3. Interesting, but I probably agree with Bullinger.

### III. The Ministry of John.

- A. Verse 1. Those days = the days the Lord was dwelling in Nazareth, Matthew 2:23. John now made his public appearance, heralding (not preaching) in the uninhabited places of Judea.
- B. Verse 2. The kingdom of heaven is at hand! What does this mean?

### IV. The Kingdom of Heaven.

- A. The kingdom of heaven nothing more nor less than the government of the heavens or heavens' government. *Basilea* means government. Has nothing to do with the trappings of a king.
- B. The Hebrew people had a strong aversion to saying the name of God, and they would seek to find some synonym they could say instead. Heaven meaning lifted up or exalted and God being the Most Exalted One, heaven is used as a substitute for God. Matthew, written to Jews, uses this substitution.
- C. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God. Some have argued against this, making the kingdom of heaven limited and the kingdom of God unlimited, meaning His universal sovereignty that has always been and always will be. Yet these ideas will not fit when they are brought into the Word of God. The best proof for the total identification of these two is that the Holy Spirit uses them interchangeably in Matthew 19:23-24. This shows us that we ought to use these terms interchangeably. In the parables, Matthew gives a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens and Mark and Luke of the kingdom of God. Matthew is the only one who uses this substitute.
- D. "At hand" means it has drawn near.
- E. He calls on them to "repent" in light of this. What does "repent" mean?

VI. Conclusion: The Lord watched over Mary, Joseph, and the Babe by sending them to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. Yet Herod soon died his deserved death, and God sent the blessed family back to the land. Not to Bethlehem, for Herod's wicked son ruled there, but back to Nazareth in Galilee, where the Lord was to grow up. As He was living there, His cousin John came on the national scene first, heralding in the wilderness of Judea that the government of the heavens was impending, and they should repent in light of it. Next time we will discuss what this important word "repent" means.