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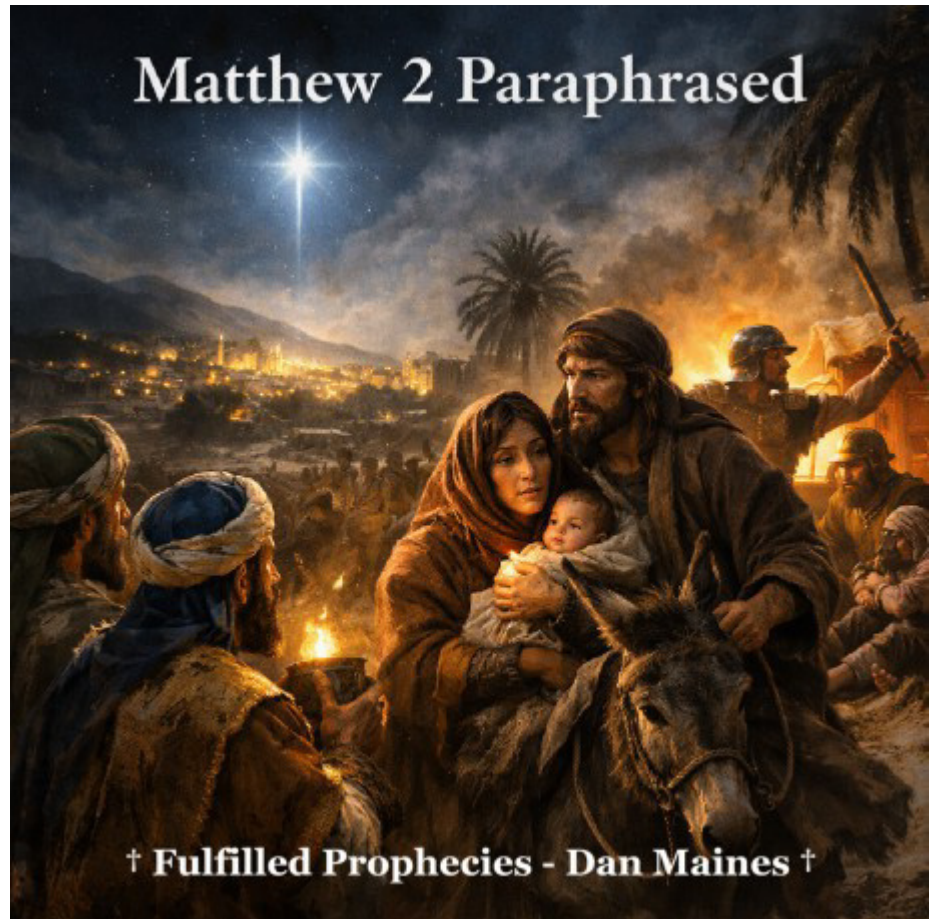
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Matthew 2 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Matthew 2 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Matthew chapter 2 records the early events surrounding Jesus after His birth, showing how even as a child He was already the focus of prophecy, political fear, and divine protection.

† The visit of the Magi, the rage of Herod, the escape to Egypt, and the return to Nazareth all happened exactly as the prophets had spoken long before.

† Matthew repeatedly shows that what happened to Jesus was not random history, it was the unfolding of God's plan that had been written centuries earlier (Matthew 1:22, Luke 24:44).

Matthew 2:1

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem.

† Bethlehem was a small town south of Jerusalem, but it was the very place the prophet Micah said the Messiah would come from (Micah 5:2).

† Herod the Great ruled Judea under Rome and was known for paranoia and violence, even executing members of his own family to protect his throne (Josephus, Antiquities 17.6.5).

† The wise men were likely eastern scholars who studied the stars and ancient writings, possibly familiar with Jewish prophecy from the time of the exile (Daniel 2:48).

Matthew 2:2

They were asking, Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to honor Him.

† Their question immediately threatened Herod because Rome had appointed him king, yet these foreigners were searching for another king.

† Balaam had spoken centuries earlier that a star would rise out of Jacob, which many connect with the sign these men saw (Numbers 24:17).

† The fact that Gentile seekers came to honor Jesus shows from the beginning that the Messiah's mission included the nations (Isaiah 60:3).

Matthew 2:3

When King Herod heard this, he was deeply troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

† Herod feared losing power, so the news of a rival king terrified him.

† Jerusalem was troubled because the people knew how violently Herod reacted to threats.

† History records Herod ordering executions to protect his throne, which explains the fear spreading through the city (Josephus, Antiquities 16.11).

Matthew 2:4

He gathered together the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah was supposed to be born.

† The religious leaders knew the scriptures well enough to answer Herod's question quickly.

† Ironically, they understood the prophecy but did not go to see the Messiah themselves.

† This shows knowledge of scripture alone does not guarantee faith or obedience (James 1:22).

Matthew 2:5

They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, because this is what the prophet wrote.

† The prophecy they quoted came from Micah and clearly identified Bethlehem as the birthplace of the ruler God promised.

† This proves the location of Jesus' birth was known among Jewish scholars long before it happened.

† Matthew highlights prophecy fulfillment to show Jesus is the promised Messiah (Micah 5:2).

Matthew 2:6

And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are certainly not the least among the rulers of Judah, because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.

† The Messiah would not only rule but shepherd the people, reflecting God's care and leadership.

† This language echoes the promise that a shepherd king like David would rise again (Ezekiel 34:23).

† Jesus later described Himself as the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Matthew 2:7

Then Herod secretly called the wise men and carefully asked them when the star had appeared.

† Herod's secrecy shows he was planning something deceptive.

† By learning the time of the star, he could estimate the age of the child.

† This information later shaped the cruel order he would give.

Matthew 2:8

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go search carefully for the child, and when you find Him, report back to me so that I can also come and honor Him.

† Herod pretended to want to honor the child, but his real intention was murder.

† This shows how rulers often feared losing power when confronted with God's authority.

† Scripture repeatedly shows wicked leaders opposing God's chosen servants (Psalm 2:2).

Matthew 2:9

After hearing the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen earlier went ahead of them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

† The star guided them directly to Jesus, showing God's active direction in the event.

† This was not an ordinary astronomical object because it moved and stopped in a specific place.

† God used creation itself to announce the arrival of the Messiah (Psalm 19:1).

Matthew 2:10

When they saw the star, they were filled with great joy.

† Their long journey ended with confirmation that they had found the promised king.

† Joy is a constant response when people encounter the work of God.

† Luke also records great joy surrounding Jesus' birth among the shepherds (Luke 2:10).

Matthew 2:11

They entered the house, saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and honored Him. They opened their treasures and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

† Gold symbolized kingship, frankincense was connected with worship, and myrrh was often used in burial preparation.

† These gifts pointed toward Jesus as king, priest, and the one who would die for His people.

† The act of bowing shows they recognized His authority.

Matthew 2:12

After being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their country by another route.

† God intervened to protect the child from Herod's plan.

† Dreams were often used in scripture to deliver divine warnings (Genesis 20:3).

† This event shows God's control over events surrounding the Messiah.

Matthew 2:13

After they left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up, take the child and His mother, escape

to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod is about to search for the child to kill Him.

† Joseph was repeatedly guided by dreams, showing God's protection over Jesus' early life.

† Egypt had a large Jewish population where they could remain unnoticed.

† This event also fulfilled prophecy connected to Israel's history (Hosea 11:1).

Matthew 2:14

So Joseph got up, took the child and His mother during the night, and left for Egypt.

† Joseph obeyed immediately without delay.

† His obedience protected the life of the child who would later save the world.

† Scripture often highlights the importance of immediate obedience to God's direction.

Matthew 2:15

They remained there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet, Out of Egypt I called My Son.

† Matthew connects Jesus' life to Israel's story, showing He represents the true Son of God.

† Hosea originally spoke of Israel coming out of Egypt, but Matthew shows the deeper fulfillment in Christ (Hosea 11:1).

† Jesus fulfills and completes the story of Israel.

Matthew 2:16

When Herod realized the wise men had not returned, he became furious. He ordered that all the boys in Bethlehem and its surrounding area two years old and under be killed, based on the time he had learned from the wise men.

- † This brutal act reveals Herod's extreme fear of losing power.
- † Historical records confirm Herod was capable of such cruelty (Josephus, Antiquities 17).
- † Satan has always attempted to destroy God's chosen deliverer throughout biblical history.

Matthew 2:17

Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled.

- † Matthew again shows prophecy being fulfilled through historical events.
- † The suffering in Bethlehem echoed earlier national grief experienced in Israel's past.
- † Prophecy often carried both historical and future significance.

Matthew 2:18

A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel crying for her children, and she refused to be comforted because they were gone.

- † Rachel symbolically represents the mothers of Israel grieving their lost children.
- † Jeremiah originally spoke these words during the Babylonian exile (Jeremiah 31:15).
- † Matthew shows how that sorrow echoed again during this tragedy.

Matthew 2:19

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.

- † Herod died around 4 BC, ending the immediate threat to Jesus.
- † Once again God directed Joseph through a dream.
- † God's protection continued until the time of Jesus' public

ministry.

Matthew 2:20

The angel said, Get up, take the child and His mother, and return to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead.

† With Herod gone, the danger had passed.

† This moment parallels Israel leaving danger and returning to their land.

† God's timing always moves according to His plan.

Matthew 2:21

Joseph got up, took the child and His mother, and returned to the land of Israel.

† Again Joseph responded with immediate obedience.

† This obedience played a key role in preserving Jesus' life.

† Faith is often shown through simple obedience.

Matthew 2:22

But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. After being warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee.

† Archelaus was known for cruelty similar to his father.

† Galilee was considered a quieter region and safer for the family.

† God's warning again protected the child.

Matthew 2:23

They settled in a town called Nazareth, fulfilling what was spoken through the prophets, that He would be called a Nazarene.

† Nazareth was a small and unimpressive town, showing the humble beginnings of Jesus' life.

- † The prophets described the Messiah as humble and despised, which Nazareth symbolized (Isaiah 53:3).
- † Jesus later became widely known as Jesus of Nazareth.

Historical References

- † Josephus describes Herod's violent paranoia and the killing of rivals (Antiquities of the Jews 16-17).
- † Tacitus records Roman political conditions in Judea during the period surrounding Herod's rule (Histories 5.13).
- † Eusebius later wrote about the early traditions surrounding Jesus' childhood events (Ecclesiastical History 1.8).

How It Applies To Us Today

- † Matthew 2 shows that God was guiding events long before anyone understood the full plan.
- † Even when rulers opposed God's purposes, His plan continued without interruption.
- † The chapter reminds us that prophecy, history, and God's protection all work together in His unfolding plan.

Q And A Appendix

Q Why did Gentile wise men recognize Jesus while many in Israel did not?

A Scripture shows the nations would seek the Messiah. Isaiah 60:3 says nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Q Why did Matthew emphasize prophecy so heavily in this chapter?

A Matthew wanted readers to see that Jesus fulfilled the scriptures. Luke 24:44 explains that everything written in the Law, Prophets, and Psalms concerning Christ had to be fulfilled.

Q Why was Egypt part of Jesus' early life?

A Matthew connects it to prophecy and to Israel's history.

Hosea 11:1 says Out of Egypt I called My Son, showing Jesus fulfilling Israel's story.

Q Why did God warn Joseph through dreams instead of direct appearance?

A Scripture shows God often used dreams to guide and protect His people. Genesis 37:5 records Joseph receiving dreams that revealed God's plans, and Matthew 1:20 shows Joseph already being guided by a dream concerning Jesus' birth.

Q Why didn't the religious leaders go to Bethlehem when they knew the prophecy?

A Knowledge alone does not produce faith. They understood the prophecy of Micah 5:2 but did not act on it. James 1:22 teaches that people must be doers of the word and not merely hearers.

Q What does the massacre of the children in Bethlehem show about the conflict surrounding Jesus' arrival?

A From the moment Jesus entered the world, earthly rulers opposed Him. Psalm 2:2 says the kings of the earth take their stand against the Lord and His Anointed.

Q Why did Jesus grow up in Nazareth instead of Bethlehem where He was born?

A God directed Joseph to Nazareth for safety and to fulfill what the prophets said about the Messiah being despised and humble. Isaiah 53:3 describes Him as despised and rejected among men.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 2:1-23; Micah 5:2; Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 60:3; Psalm 2:2; Psalm 19:1; Luke 2:10; Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 31:15; Isaiah 53:3; Luke 24:44

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews; Tacitus, Histories 5.13; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 1.8

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