

Approximately 30 minutes expository message



God's Protection in a Dangerous World

Matthew 2:13-18



Opening Prayer

Father God, we come before You in the name of Jesus Christ. Thank You for Your Word, which is living, powerful, and true. As we study this difficult but important passage, open our hearts and minds. Help us see Your sovereign hand even in moments of danger, suffering, and sorrow.

Lord, strengthen our faith. Teach us to obey You as Joseph did, to trust You when we do not understand, and to find our hope in Jesus Christ. Comfort those

who are hurting, awaken those who are spiritually asleep, and draw the lost to salvation.

May Your Holy Spirit guide this message, and may Jesus receive all the glory. In His wonderful name we pray. Amen.

Introduction:

Good day, brothers and sisters. My name is Roc, and my wonderful wife is Roe. We have ten amazing grandchildren, and they all call us Roc and Roe. I think that is just too cool!

Today, we are opening our Bibles to Matthew chapter 2, verses 13 through 18. I have titled this message:

“God’s Protection in a Dangerous World.”

The passage before us contains both deliverance and deep sorrow. We will see

God protecting the young Jesus through the faithful obedience of Joseph. But we will also see the cruelty of King Herod and the heartbreaking suffering of families in Bethlehem.

This passage reminds us that the coming of Jesus was not welcomed by everyone. Some worshiped Him, but others wanted to destroy Him.

Jesus came as the true King, but Herod saw Him as a threat. The wise men bowed before Jesus, but Herod raised his hand against Him.

Our God is sovereign...even in a dangerous world.



Historical Setting

Matthew wrote his Gospel particularly with a Jewish audience in mind. Throughout the book, he repeatedly shows that Jesus is the

promised Messiah and that events in His life fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures.

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 2, wise men...or Magi...arrived from the east asking:

  (NIV) ***Matthew 2:1-2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ¹***

Herod the Great ruled Judea under the authority of Rome. He was politically skilled and was known for great building projects, including the expansion of the temple in Jerusalem. But he was also cruel,

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:1–2.

suspicious, and violently protective of his throne.

Herod had members of his own family killed because he suspected them of plotting against him. Therefore, when the wise men spoke about a child who had been born **“king of the Jews,”** Herod did not hear good news. He heard a threat.

Herod told the wise men to find the child and report back to him, pretending that he also wanted to worship Him. But Herod did not want to worship Jesus. He wanted to destroy Him.

After finding Jesus, the wise men worshiped Him and presented their gifts. God then warned the Magi in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went home by another route.

  Now here is God's Word.



(NIV)

Matthew 2:13-18 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”ⁿ

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

***¹⁸ “A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”²***

Section 1. God Warns Joseph

***Matthew 2:13 When they had gone, an
angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in
a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the
child and his mother and escape to
Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for
Herod is going to search for the child to
kill him.”³***

This teaches us something important:



God is never surprised.

² [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:13–18.

³ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:13.

Herod's plans were hidden from others, but not from God. Before the soldiers arrived, the Lord had already warned Joseph.

We are often surprised by the things that happen in life.

- A telephone call can suddenly change everything.
- A medical diagnosis can catch us off guard.
- A job can end unexpectedly.
- A relationship can fall apart.
- A tragedy can enter a family without warning.

👉 But God is never caught off guard.

God knew Herod's thoughts. He understood Herod's intentions, and He acted at exactly the right time.

The angel told Joseph to take **“the child and his mother.”** (v.13) That order is significant. Jesus is mentioned first

because He is the central person in the story. Mary was highly favored by God and was chosen for a wonderful purpose, but Jesus is the Savior. **Jesus is the King. Jesus is the Son of God.**

   God was protecting the One who had come to save His people from their sins.

 We should also notice that God did not tell Joseph every detail of what would happen.

 He simply told him what to do next.

Joseph was **not** given the entire plan. He was given the **next step**.

- ❖ We want God to show us the whole road. We want to know what will happen next month, next year, and ten years from now.

👉 But God often gives us enough light for the next step.

***Psalm 119:105* says: ¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* ⁴**

🤔💭 A lamp does not always illuminate the entire journey. It gives enough light to take the next faithful step.

🤔🔓🔑 Maybe you do not understand everything God is doing in your life. You may not know how the situation will turn out. But you can trust God enough to obey what He has already shown you.

2. Joseph Obeys Immediately

***Matthew 2:14* ¹⁴ *So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,* ⁵**

⁴ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ps 119:105.

⁵ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:14.

Matthew tells us that Joseph got up during the night, took Jesus and Mary, and left for Egypt. There was no argument and no delay; Joseph simply obeyed.

This was not an easy command. Joseph had to awaken his family, gather whatever possessions they could carry, and leave for another country in the darkness of night.

Egypt was outside Herod's jurisdiction, making it a place of safety. It also had established Jewish communities where Joseph and his family could possibly find assistance. Even so, the journey was difficult and uncertain.

But Joseph did not allow unanswered questions to become excuses for disobedience.

 Joseph's obedience was immediate.

   Delayed obedience can become disobedience. When God tells us to forgive,

turn from sin, make something right, or walk through a door of ministry, faith responds.

Joseph did not have a recorded speaking part in Scripture, but his actions speak loudly. He was a man who listened to God and did what God told him to do.

Joseph had already obeyed God by taking Mary as his wife. Now he obeyed God by protecting Jesus and Mary from Herod.

Faith is not only believing something in our minds. Genuine faith produces obedience.

Joseph could not control Herod. He could not control the Roman government. He could not control the dangerous world around him. But he could control his response to God.

The same is true for us.

- We cannot control everything that happens in the world.

- We cannot control every decision another person makes.
- We cannot control the economy, the government, or tomorrow's circumstances.

   But by the grace of God, we can choose to trust and obey the Lord today.

3. Jesus Is Called Out of Egypt

  (NIV) ***Matthew 2:15¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”^{n 6}***

Joseph remained in Egypt with Jesus and Mary until the death of Herod. Matthew then explains that this fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

“Out of Egypt I called my son.”

(Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1)

⁶ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:15.

Matthew is quoting from Hosea chapter 11.

- ❖ In its original setting, Hosea 11:1 spoke of the nation of Israel. God loved Israel as His son and delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. Sadly, even after experiencing God's love and deliverance, Israel repeatedly turned away and failed to remain faithful to Him.

🤔💭 Matthew shows us that Jesus identified Himself with the history of Israel. Jesus came as the **faithful Son who would succeed** where Israel had failed.

- Israel came out of Egypt, passed through the waters, and was tested in the wilderness, yet often failed.
- Jesus came out of Egypt, was baptized, and was tested in the wilderness, but He remained completely faithful.

👉 Jesus is the true and faithful Son.

- It is also interesting that Egypt, which had once been a place of slavery for Israel, temporarily became a place of refuge for Jesus.

💡 God is able to use unexpected places and unexpected people to accomplish His purpose.

Sometimes the place we would never choose becomes the place where God protects us, teaches us, and prepares us for what comes next.

Joseph probably did not understand how this journey connected with prophecy. He was simply obeying God. Yet his obedience became part of God's greater plan.

! That should encourage us.

😬 🔓 🔑 We do not always understand how our small acts of obedience fit into God's larger purposes. We may think we are simply doing the next right thing. But

God can use ordinary obedience to accomplish something far greater than we can see.

Joseph was not standing before a great crowd. He was caring for his family and obeying God in the night. Yet his faithfulness was part of the **unfolding plan of redemption**.

   Never underestimate what God can do through **a faithful** servant.

4. Herod's Anger and the Deception of Sin

  (NIV) ***Matthew 2:16¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.⁷***

⁷ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:16.

When Herod realized that the wise men had not returned to him, he became furious. He ordered the killing of the boys in Bethlehem and the surrounding area who were two years old and under, based on the time he had learned from the wise men.

- ❖ “Scripture does not give us the exact number of children killed. Because Bethlehem was a small village, scholars estimate that perhaps six to twenty boys, two years old and younger, were murdered by Herod’s order. The number may have been small compared with the population of the Roman Empire, but every child was precious, and every family’s grief was massive.”

Herod’s reaction reveals the terrible progression of sin: he felt threatened, turned to deception, gave himself to anger, and finally brought violence and death.

   Sin rarely remains small. When it is welcomed, protected, and fed, **it grows**.

  (NIV) ***James 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. ⁸***

Herod wanted to protect his throne. His desire for power became greater than his concern for human life.

This is what happens when something other than **God** “rules the heart”.

Herod had a throne in Jerusalem, but the throne of his heart was occupied by **pride, fear, and selfish ambition**.

There was room in Herod’s kingdom for religion. He consulted the chief priests and teachers of the law. He wanted to know

⁸ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jas 1:15.

what the Bible said about the Messiah's birthplace.

👉 But there was no room in Herod's heart for Jesus to rule.

That is still possible today.

Herod did not mind discussing prophecy. What he could not accept was another King.

😞 🔒 🔑 That is the **central issue** for every human heart: **Who will sit on the throne?**

Will I rule my own life, or will I surrender to Jesus?

Herod tried to destroy Jesus rather than bow before Him. But in the end, Herod died, and Jesus lived.

💡 Every earthly ruler eventually leaves his throne, but Jesus reigns forever.

Psalm 2 speaks of the nations and rulers standing against the Lord and His Anointed One. Yet God declares that He has established His King.

Herod's violence was real, and the suffering he caused was terrible. But Herod could not stop God's plan.

5. The Sorrow in Bethlehem



(NIV)

Matthew 2:17-18 ¹⁷ **Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:**

¹⁸ **“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”** ⁹

⁹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mt 2:16–18.

Matthew then refers to the prophet Jeremiah and describes a voice of weeping and great mourning. Rachel is pictured as weeping for her children and refusing comfort because they are gone.

This is one of the saddest passages in the Christmas story.

We often picture the birth of Jesus with peaceful scenes...Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, and wise men. But the coming of Christ also exposed the darkness and cruelty of the world He entered.

- The Bible does not hide human suffering.
- It does not pretend that following God means we will never experience pain.
- It does not offer shallow answers to grieving parents.

Matthew allows us to hear the sound of weeping in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was a small town, Scripture does not tell us the exact number. But whether the number was five, ten, twenty, or more, every child was precious. Every family experienced real grief.

A smaller number does not mean smaller sorrow.

The families of Bethlehem did not know the full spiritual battle taking place around them. They only knew that their children were gone.

  This raises a difficult question: If God protected Jesus, why did He allow the other children to die?

The passage does not give us a complete explanation for every detail of suffering. The Bible teaches us that we live in a **fallen world** where **sin** produces real pain. Herod, not God, ordered the murders. Herod was responsible for his evil actions.

🤔 🔓 🔑 God's sovereignty does not remove human responsibility.

👉 At the same time, God promises that evil will not have the final word.

📖 + (NIV) **Jeremiah 31:15** **¹⁵ This is what the LORD says:**

**"A voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."** ¹⁰

This originally described Rachel weeping symbolically as the people of Judah were taken into exile. Rachel was considered one of the mothers of Israel, and her tomb was associated with the region near Bethlehem.

¹⁰ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Je 31:15.

But Jeremiah chapter 31 does not end with weeping. The chapter continues with hope. God promises restoration and a future for His people.

Matthew's use of Jeremiah therefore points not only to sorrow but also beyond sorrow. There is mourning now, but God's redemptive plan is still moving forward.

! That does not mean we should tell grieving people simply to stop crying.

Jesus never treated grief as a lack of faith.

👉 At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus wept.

He knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, yet He still entered the family's sorrow.

😞 🔓 🗝️ Christian hope does not mean we never cry. It means we do not cry without hope.

There are times when the most spiritual thing we can do is sit beside someone who is hurting, listen to them, pray with them, and weep with them.

  (NIV) ***Romans 12:15*** says: ***¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.¹¹***

We may **not** have every answer, but we can point people to the Savior who understands suffering.

And because Jesus rose from the grave, suffering and death will not have the final word for those who belong to Him.

6. The Spiritual Battle Behind the Story

There is more taking place here than the anger of one earthly king.

¹¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 12:15.

Revelation chapter 12 gives us a picture of a great dragon standing before a woman, waiting to devour her child. The Child is the One who will rule the nations. The dragon represents Satan, who has always opposed God's redemptive plan.

At the cross, it appeared that darkness had won. Jesus was betrayed, arrested, beaten, mocked, crucified, and placed in a tomb.

But three days later, the stone was rolled away.

👉 Jesus rose from the dead.

Satan's greatest apparent victory became his greatest defeat.

  (NIV) ***Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.¹²***

¹² [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Col 2:15.

This teaches that Christ disarmed the spiritual powers and triumphed over them through the cross.

We are not called to live in fear of Satan.

   We are called to remain close to Jesus, stand upon His Word, put on the armor of God, and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. Practical Lessons for Our Lives

First, trust God when you cannot see the whole plan.

- You may not understand what God is doing in your life right now. But God sees what you cannot see.
- You do not need to know every detail before you trust Him.

Second, obey God without unnecessary delay.

- When God has made His will clear through Scripture, we should not keep asking for another sign.
- Obedience is one of the clearest expressions of faith.

Third, faithfully care for those God has entrusted to you.

- Faithfulness often takes place in ordinary moments....caring for a spouse, raising children, helping grandchildren, serving the church, encouraging someone who is struggling, or standing beside a hurting friend.
- You do not need a public platform to be used by God.

Fourth, do not allow anything to take the throne that belongs to Jesus.

- Pride says, “I will rule my life.”
- Faith says, “Jesus, You are Lord.”

- Every day we must surrender our plans, desires, relationships, possessions, and future, 🙌 to Christ.

Fifth, remember that God is present in sorrow.

- If your heart is broken today, God sees you.

Psalm 34:18 says: ¹⁸ *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* ¹³

- You may not understand why something happened, but you can bring your pain honestly to Jesus.

Sixth, remember that evil will not win.

- The world may appear dark, but the Light of the world has come.

¹³ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ps 34:18.

- And everyone who belongs to Him has a living hope.

An Invitation to Be Born Again

As we close, we must ask the most important question: What will you do with Jesus?

- The wise men bowed before Him.
- Joseph obeyed Him.
- Herod resisted Him.

Which response describes you?

- You may know about Jesus without personally knowing Him.
- You may know the Christmas story, attend church, own a Bible, and believe that Jesus existed.

But salvation requires more than knowing facts about Christ.

Jesus came into this dangerous and sinful world for you.

The Bible says in   (NIV) **Romans 3:23**
²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,¹⁴

Sin separates us from God, and none of us can save ourselves through good works, religion, or personal effort.

👉 But God loves us.

Jesus lived the sinless life we could never live. He willingly went to the cross and received the judgment **our sins** that we personal deserved. He died, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

Jesus has already paid the price.

Salvation is God's gift, received through faith.

Jesus said: **John 3:7 "...You must be born again."**

¹⁴ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 3:23.

To be born again means that God gives you new spiritual life. He forgives your sins, makes you His child, and places His Holy Spirit within you.

You come to Him by turning from your sin and placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

You do not need to clean yourself up before coming to Jesus. Come as you are, but come willing to surrender.

Herod tried to hold on to his throne. Salvation begins when we step down from the throne of our lives and receive Jesus as King.

If you are ready to receive Christ, you can call upon Him now. The prayer itself does not save you; Jesus saves you. But you can express your faith to Him in words like these:

Prayer of Salvation

**Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner,
and I cannot save myself.... I believe that
You are the Son of God.... I believe You
died on the cross for my sins and rose
from the dead....**

**Please forgive me.... I turn away from
my sin and place my faith in You....
Come into my life, make me new, and
help me follow You....**

**I surrender the throne of my life to You...
From this day forward, I confess You as
my Savior and my Lord....**

**Thank You for loving me, forgiving me,
and giving me eternal life.... In Your
name I pray. Amen.**

**If you sincerely placed your faith in Jesus
Christ,**

- **tell another Christian about your
decision.**

- Begin reading the Bible,
- spend time in prayer,
- and become part of a Bible-teaching church where you can grow in your relationship with Christ.

Conclusion:

Matthew 2:13-18 reminds us that we live in a world where danger, sin, and sorrow are real.

But the protection, promises, and sovereign power of God were also real.

And Jesus...the Child Herod tried to destroy.... grew up, went to the cross, conquered death, and became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who believes.

When the world seems dangerous, trust the Lord.

When God speaks through His Word, obey Him.

When your heart is broken, draw near to Jesus.

When evil appears powerful, remember that its time is limited.

- Herod is gone.
- Jesus is alive.

The kingdoms of this world will pass away, but the kingdom of Jesus Christ will never end.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You that nothing can stop Your plan, defeat Your Son, or separate Your children from Your love.

Help us follow Joseph's example of quiet, immediate, and faithful obedience. When we cannot see the whole road, teach us to trust You with the next step. Give us courage to protect and care for those You have entrusted to us.

Lord, comfort those who are grieving today. Draw near to every broken heart. Remind them that You see every tear and that suffering and death will not have the final word.

Guard us from the pride of Herod. May we never resist the rightful rule of Jesus. Help us surrender every part of our lives to Him.

For anyone who has received Christ today, strengthen their faith and guide them into a life of discipleship. Use all of us to share the hope of the gospel with a hurting world.

Thank You that Jesus Christ is alive, that He reigns as King, and that He is coming again, very soon.

We ask all these things in the wonderful and powerful name of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.