

Special Delivery

Matthew 2:13-23 December 14, 2025

How many packages were delivered to your house this week? If you don't do online shopping, think about how often a delivery truck drove down your street in the last few days.

During the Christmas season, UPS delivers 32 million packages *a day*.¹ USPS does another 23 million. *Plus* all those Amazon deliveries. Americans place 200 Amazon orders *per second*.²

Unfortunately, those packages aren't all that safe. Who here has had a delivery stolen from their porch? You're not alone. It's happened to 25% of Americans. In fact, each year somewhere around 37 million packages are stolen off the porch and *half* that number happens in December.³

People put up Ring cameras, but all that shows you is your delivery walking off. Wouldn't it be nice to get a warning *before* the thief comes?

That's exactly what happens in our text today. The Gift of God has been delivered. Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph - born to *us*! But a thief and killer was coming to rob His life. With only hours or maybe moments to spare, Joseph is warned in a dream by an angel to pack up and run.

It's a dramatic and dangerous escape. But as the story plays out we realize that this was not *only* about saving Jesus' life. These events also shine a *light* on Who He is. That He *is* the Messiah.

History has produced many individuals who claim to be the messiah. You can find people that still today making that claim. But in this text, once again we see the Bible proving that Jesus is *the* Christ. The One the world has waited for for thousands of years. He is the *only* One Who fits the bill. Have you purchased anything this season that ended up *not* being what you thought you ordered? Jesus is no Temu Messiah. He is *the* special Delivery from heaven, sent to save us.

Matthew 2:13-14 - ¹³ After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt.

"They" refers to the Wise Men and their entourage who came bearing gifts to worship the newborn King. By this time, Jesus is at least 6 months old and maybe as much as 2 years old.⁴ And Mary and Joseph had settled in Bethlehem. They're found living in a *house* when the Magi arrive.

¹ <https://www.heraldnews.com/story/opinion/2019/12/12/behind-scenes-at-ups-during/2098897007/>

² <https://capitaloneshopping.com/research/amazon-logistics-statistics/>

³ <https://lombardohomes.com/package-theft-study>

⁴ Frank Gaebelein, D. A. Carson, Walter Wessel, and Walter Liefeld *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

So, if you have a nativity scene in your house somewhere, it's ok if you have the Wise Men figurines on site, it's just not what happened. They weren't at the manger. To add a little fun and accuracy to your holiday decor, I'd recommend doing what we do, and that's have the Wise Men "travel" through the house all December. People do Elf on a Shelf, why not do Wise Men in the front den?

Joseph and Mary would've been *shocked* when these visitors arrived. But they had no idea that more was coming. That was going to be their *last night* in their home. Joseph's sleep was interrupted by an urgent message from an angel: "Get up *right now* and run!"

They'd have to take a 150 mile⁵ trip *right then*, in the dark of night with a nursing Baby! Let's talk about what they *didn't* have: They didn't have a car or flashlights or lots of money to pay someone to take them. They didn't have private security to protect the motorcade. They probably didn't have weeks of provisions to pack, or the *time* needed to pack them. They didn't even have a *specific* destination. "Get to Egypt."

But here's what they *did* have: A God Who was watching over them. Did you notice the angel said, "Stay in Egypt *until I tell you*. Joseph, you're gonna here from me again." You see, *Herod* was going to *look* for the Child, but he wouldn't find Him. Meanwhile, Joseph and Mary and Jesus were *never* outside of the loving watch of God. He *saw* them. He was *with* them. He would *guide* them.

We might think, "Of course God is going to watch out for Jesus. Jesus is special." And you're absolutely right. But that doesn't mean God doesn't watch over you. In fact, one of the things the Bible reveals *many times* is that God's eyes are always on us. One example is Psalm 33:

Psalm 33:18-19 - ¹⁸ But look, the LORD keeps his eye on those who fear him—those who depend on his faithful love ¹⁹ to rescue them from death and to keep them alive in famine.

Now, if you're *not* a Christian, that doesn't mean God isn't watching. Proverbs explains that God's eyes are *everywhere*, observing the wicked *and* the good.⁶ And if you are not a Christian, God is not only observing, He is keeping an account because the sins you commit must be judged.

Mark 2:15 - ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called my Son.

Joseph and his family wouldn't be totally isolated in their new home. In fact, about a million Jews lived in Egypt during this period.⁷ At the same time, their lives are *totally* uprooted. The *king* of Judea wanted to kill their Baby. And now they would just have to hold in Egypt until further notice. As Charles Spurgeon rightly points out, "Waiting is hard work, *especially* waiting in Egypt."⁸

⁵ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Matthew*

⁶ Proverbs 15:3

⁷ Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*

⁸ Charles Spurgeon *The Gospel Of The Kingdom: A Commentary On The Book Of Matthew*

But there was purpose to their waiting. It was not only to keep Jesus out of Herod's reach, but it also was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy - specifically Hosea 11:1. What these scenes reveal is that Jesus would be a Deliverer like *Moses*. In fact, *greater* than Moses. Moses, whose life was threatened by royal decree, escaped against all odds into a far away land, only to return once the previous ruler was dead to deliver God's people, was a foreshadow of the ultimate Deliverer.

And Moses knew it! He himself told the Israelites to watch for a Prophet who would be like him.⁹ And here Jesus starts to fulfill not just one but *many* prophecies found in the Old Testament.

Matthew 2:16-18 - ¹⁶ **Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men.** ¹⁷ **Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:** ¹⁸ **A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.**

Herod was enraged that the Wise Men didn't reveal where Jesus was. Of course, *he* had tried to trick *them*.¹⁰ Now he reaps what he sowed. He is outwitted and the *real* King escapes his grasp.

But, that wouldn't stop Herod from lashing out with another desperate attempt to keep his claws on the throne. He was near the end of his life, but all he cared about was staying in power. Whenever *anything* might challenge his rule, the tool he reached for was *death*.

He had his three eldest sons killed. He killed his favorite wife. He killed his brother-in-law and mother-in-law.¹¹ There was once a high priest of Israel who was a young and popular competitor to Herod. That fellow had an unfortunate "drowning accident" in a pool only a few feet deep.¹²

As he lay dying, Herod ordered that, *when* he died, the oldest child in every Judean home should be killed so that everyone in the nation would have a proper attitude of mourning.¹³

Death was always his tool. Meanwhile, what does the *true* King extend? *Life*. Life to all who will receive it. Life to the undeserving. Life to the guilty. Everlasting life. Life more abundantly.

Christians, let's remind ourselves that we walk in newness of *life*. The words given to us by Jesus are words of life.¹⁴ Let us never see death as a tool. Our enemies don't need death. What they need is to be brought *out* of death into life through the power of the Gospel and the grace of Jesus.

⁹ Deuteronomy 18:15

¹⁰ Darrell Block *Matthew: A Commentary For Biblical Preaching And Teaching*

¹¹ France

¹² Craig Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (Second Edition)*

¹³ Allen

¹⁴ John 6:63

That night, Herod brought a great evil to Bethlehem. But Bethlehem was so small and Herod killed so many people in his life that historians outside the Bible bothered to record this atrocity. It was probably between 10 and 30 boys.¹⁵ Truly awful. But just a blip in Herod's wickedness.

This is why Jesus had to come to save us. Because of the violence and the evil and the death that sin brought into the world. Without divine intervention there is no hope for humanity because there is a Herod living inside *all* of our hearts. Oh, we may not do the things he did. But the same sin nature is at work in us. The same root of selfishness, of hatred, of pride.

Matthew 2:19-20 - ¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead."

The same message came to Moses. "Return, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead."¹⁶ The Bible is so clear that Jesus is the Son of God, that He is the Messiah. That He is the *only* Savior.

For all his schemes, for all his attempts to cling to power, Herod could not conquer death. The historian Josephus records how he died a "particularly gruesome, slow, and painful death from disease."¹⁷ All he had done was for nothing. He brought nothing but sorrow and ruin to the world. That's the *best* we can hope for in a life outside of Christ. The *only* destination, no matter what route you take, is the grave. But God sent His Son Jesus Christ as a gift so that you may have *life* and that more abundantly. The Deliverer has been delivered to you. Have you received Him?

Matthew 2:21-22 - ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee.

Another angelic visit in a dream. I wonder what Joseph thought every night before he went to sleep?

It was time to return to Israel. But there was a new problem: Archelaus. He was the *worst* of Herod's sons.¹⁸ He was so bad and cruel that eventually Caesar Augustus removed him from power.¹⁹ It seems Joseph had hoped to settle back down in Bethlehem, but they decided to move to Galilee.

So, once again, we see Joseph submitting to what the Lord required more than what he desired. Joseph is *such* a great example to us of obedience. *Immediate* obedience. Trusting obedience. Costly obedience. None of these things he had to do made life easier or more prestigious or more

¹⁵ Block

¹⁶ Exodus 4:19

¹⁷ Block

¹⁸ Allen

¹⁹ Craig Blomberg *The New American Commentary, Volume 22: Matthew*

lucrative for himself. But he had submitted his heart, his life, his family to the will of God and when the Lord give him direction he obeyed in heart and in action.

Galilee wasn't an exciting destination. It was considered a "dark and ignorant" place.²⁰ The despised backwoods. But Joseph did not act like Herod. He did not try to overthrow God's rule of his life. He submitted and followed. He believed and worshiped with his life choices.

Matthew 2:23 - ²³ Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

We may not remember that Mary and Joseph had *previously* lived in Nazareth.²¹ Before the census that brought them to Bethlehem, that's where they lived. They probably still had family there. Archaeological discoveries show that many people from the Bethlehem area had relocated there.²²

But understand that Nazareth was not a nice place to live. First off, it was tiny. It was no Jerusalem. It wasn't even *Bethlehem*. Maybe 400-500 people.²³ And it was one of the most despised places in the nation.

But Matthew points out that even this played into the prophetic description of Who the Messiah is. "He would be called a Nazarene." Now, you prophecy students might say, "Where is the Messiah called a Nazarene? Which Old Testament prophet?" The answer is: *None of them*.

So what's going on? Well, first of all, notice how Matthew doesn't cite a *quote*, he says, "the prophets tell us the Messiah will be called something." It's not a quote it's a *theme*.²⁴

"To be called a Nazarene was to be spoken of as a *despicable*."²⁵ *That* was a theme found all over the Old Testament - that the Messiah would be reviled, rejected, despised. Psalms 22:6: "[I am] scorned by mankind and despised by people." Isaiah 53:3: "He was despised and rejected by men...and we didn't value Him."

On the night before Jesus' crucifixion, people gather around Peter and say, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene!" And Peter says, "Oh not me. I wasn't with *Him*. I don't even know Him!"²⁶

Jesus is the Creator of the universe. The King of every king. God of very God. And He was willing to endure *this* kind of rejection and reviling and mistreatment *for you*. Yes, people would insult Him His whole life because He was one of those *Nazarenes*. But all the while, Heaven smiled. Because being called a Nazarene meant something else. It wasn't only an insult.

²⁰ Spurgeon

²¹ Luke 1:26, 2:4

²² Keener

²³ France

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ James Morrison *A Practical Commentary On The Gospel According To Matthew*

²⁶ Matthew 26:71-72

You see, the name Nazareth means a sprout or a branch.²⁷ And in Isaiah 11:1 we read, “Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” This passage prophesies that The Branch would rise from David’s line in obscurity and low estate,²⁸ but that His righteous reign would spread across the whole world forever. There is a play on words here, because the Hebrew word for “branch” sounds like the word Nazareth.²⁹

So, sure. Call Him the Nazarene. They meant it for reviling, but at the same time it revealed that Jesus is the Deliverer, the Messiah, the Savior, the King, the gift of God sent to us that we might be rescued from sin and death and walk with God day by day until we are brought to live in His forever Kingdom.

The thieves and killers and powers and principalities of darkness could not stop this delivery. And they can’t stop it in your life. But you can choose to *not* receive the gift. You can choose to leave Him outside the door of your life. Don’t do it. It’s the worst possible mistake you could ever make.

And you Christians here today, remember that even if you don’t have a visit from the Wise Men or an angel talking to you tonight as you sleep, God is still watching your life. He has given us the Holy Spirit for direction, for empowerment, for endurance, for strength. Our part is to follow, to obey, to know that His leading is the only way that leads to the life we really want. You’ve received the gift of salvation, now keep unpacking the *other* gifts God loves to give His people.

²⁷ Spurgeon, Bill Mounce

²⁸ Gaebelien

²⁹ Block