

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

STUDY FIVE

Destination-Driven Dreams

Matthew 2:13–23

When God leads you to do something, it will often include things you've never experienced before. It will really stretch you.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

How does God lead? In ancient times, He led His people by speaking in visions to prophets who declared God's message to anyone who would listen. The newly freed Hebrews found their way through the Sinai desert by following God's cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21).

Today, God declares His message through Scripture, our bright light for journeying through the dark wilderness of the world. Scripture teaches us God's truth so we can recognize the Spirit's inner promptings; seek counsel from wise, godly friends; and tune into His affirming peace when we take those first tenuous steps in obedience to God's leading.

Joseph and Mary, however, didn't have a Bible like ours, nor did they have the indwelling Holy Spirit. So God led through dreams—which is not the sort of guidance we'd expect today, but it fit a pattern in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth. Five times at crucial moments, God supernaturally declared His will in a dream.

Let's take a closer look at God's use of dreams in Matthew 2:13–23 and the ways God protected Joseph and Mary during Jesus' tender and most vulnerable childhood years.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Destination-Driven Dreams

Matthew 2:13–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Quiet your heart before Jesus and invite His presence into your time in His Word.

Father, I come before You spiritually hungry and needy, desperate for Your help, Your guidance, and Your comfort. Your Word is very comforting indeed. Thank You for it. Thank You for presenting Jesus, our Lord and Savior, so clearly in it. I want to use this time to know Him more deeply so I can follow Him more faithfully. For His glory and in His name I pray, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Matthew 2:13–23 does not contain the only dreams we encounter in Matthew's gospel. First, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:20). And, second, an angel appeared to the magi in a dream telling them to avoid Herod (2:12). As we'll see ahead, those two dreams were only the start of it!

Let's use the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method to explore three additional ways the Lord led the beloved family of His Son.¹



Observation: Away from Home, Away from Comfort

Slowly and thoughtfully read [Matthew 2:13–23](#). Note below the characters and places mentioned.



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What three verses from this passage record God's use of a dream? Who received the dream and what outcome did each dream produce?

Verse	Person	Outcome

Matthew mentions a dream five times in two chapters. Any time you run across the repetition of a phrase or word that many times, it's telling you something. God is leading them into His will through dreams. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Three particular events “fulfilled” prophecy. What Old Testament texts did Matthew quote (*Matthew 2:14–15, 17–18, 23*)?

Did you catch verse 14? “That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary.” God revealed His will to Joseph in a dream, and Joseph wasted no time in obeying God's instructions. Once he knew the right action and direction, he took flight on the wings of obedient faith.



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Interpretation: God's Protection

Let's interpret what we've observed by formulating principles, which are timeless truths that summarize the theological meaning of a passage. Think of principles as bridges of truth from the past to the present. To kick us off, can you think of a principle based on Joseph's trusting and unhesitating response to God's warning?

While you may be impressed with Mary for getting up right away and trusting her husband and going, I'm impressed with Joseph too. He got it. There's not any resistance, there's no argument. There's not any wrestling. "Let's go. God says this, let's go." He's a fine man. Not enough has ever been said about Joseph's faithfulness and what a tough journey they endured. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Joseph and Mary would have travelled as far as 300 miles if their destination in Egypt was Alexandria. How would Joseph and Mary have paid for their sojourn in Egypt (*Matthew 2:10–11*)? What principle can we draw from how God provided for Joseph and Mary?



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Roughly one million Jews resided in Egypt when Joseph and Mary fled there. Lest they settle in and make a life for themselves in Egypt, God instructed them to return to Israel. How did God protect the family from Archelaus, Herod's son and heir to the throne (*Matthew 2:22*)? Find Nazareth on your *Bible map*. Why do you think Joseph settled his family in this rural, hill-country village?

Jesus would grow up in the mundane, obscure, even despised Galilean village of Nazareth. Sometimes, God wants us to live quiet, unneeded, inconsequential lives in the eyes of the world. Write a principle about how God sometimes guides us to unknown places and His reasons for doing so.

It is in these seasons of quiet growth unseen by others that we still ourselves before God, enjoy His presence, and prepare for what He has for us next, whenever or whatever that may be.



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Matthew 2:13–23



Correlation: Early Movements, a Clue to Jesus' Identity

Matthew refers to Old Testament prophets on three occasions to interpret Jesus' early movements from Bethlehem to Egypt and Egypt to Nazareth. Those movements *fulfilled* what the ancient prophets wrote. In the original Greek language of Matthew's gospel, "fulfill" means "complete." The completion might refer to:

- A type (like glorious king Solomon), which points to its antitype (the all-glorious King Jesus)
- An illustration (like Passover), which awaits its referent (like Jesus our sacrificial lamb)
- A promise (like a Davidic Messiah), which needs its realization (like the arrival of Jesus)
- A series of events (like Israel's return from exile), which anticipates its climax (Jesus' salvation).²

Matthew quoted Hosea 11:1 to show how Jesus, the true Son of God, would undo the continued disobedience of God's adopted son, Israel. Matthew quoted Jeremiah 31:5 to show that hope lay on the other side of Bethlehem's tragedy just as salvation awaited Israel after gathering in Ramah to trek to Babylon in exile (Jeremiah 40:1).

But Nazareth? Matthew stated that his third quote comes from the *prophets*. Technically, you won't find that quote anywhere in your Old Testament. Matthew likely had one of two ideas in mind.

The first is a play on words—almost a prophetic pun. In Isaiah 11:1 the prophet anticipates a new "shoot" from the line of Jesse. In Hebrew that word for "shoot" is *nzr*. It's easy to see how Matthew recognized the *nzr* in *Nazareth* as a literal fulfilment of Isaiah's words.

Alternatively, Matthew might be thinking of the passages that foretold a humble Messiah, such as Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised." It follows that a despised Messiah would come from a despised town like Nazareth.

How does [John 1:46](#); [7:41–42](#); and [7:52](#) depict the bad reputation of Nazareth of Galilee?



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How do Old Testament prophecies *Psalms 22:1–8; 69:5–12; and Isaiah 53:1–3* depict God's Anointed as having an unappealing reputation?

Jesus, the Messiah, resided in Nazareth fulfilling, in part, the prophecies that showed how this world disdained and despised Him. In God's mysterious and wonderful plan, however, Jesus' rejection led to His crucifixion . . . and His crucifixion would lead to His resurrection, and His resurrection now leads to the redemption of many.



Application: God's Will Today

We don't need divine dreams to learn God's will like Joseph did. But we do need certain faith-filled disciplines to follow God's will, which Joseph himself modeled. Reflect below on Pastor Chuck's teaching that connects the nature of God's will and the corresponding disciplines needed to follow it.

- 1) *Sometimes God's will is sudden and quick.* This requires the discipline of *trusting God* even when we can't stay as many steps ahead as we would like. Joseph simply gathered up his family and took them to Egypt.
- 2) *Sometimes God's will is surprising and confusing.* This requires the discipline of *waiting on God* without knowing exactly how God will come through in the situation. Joseph went to Judea and waited there in fear of Archelaus until God said move.
- 3) *Sometimes God's will is mysteriously mundane.* This requires the discipline of *humility*, of being faithful where God has placed us. Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Nazareth where Jesus would live in obscurity until Jesus began his ministry when He was about thirty years old (Luke 3:23).



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Which of the three traits of God's will characterizes His call on your life right now?

What discipline must you exercise to prove faithful to the task? And how must you exercise that discipline?

Wherever you find yourself, may the discipline necessary for that time become yours. Think about your situation. You may be in a discipline of trusting God since He brought you here unexpectedly or where you are in life. It may be a discipline of waiting on God because it's confusing and surprising. Or it may be a discipline of accepting God's plan as the mundane days stack into weeks and months and years. Be still and know that He's God.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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A FINAL PRAYER

Reflect on what God taught you through this passage and how He is leading you. Record a fitting prayer below.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Read page 47 in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15* for Pastor Chuck Swindoll's full explanation of the different ways Matthew uses the word *fulfill* with reference to prophecy.



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STUDY FIVE

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

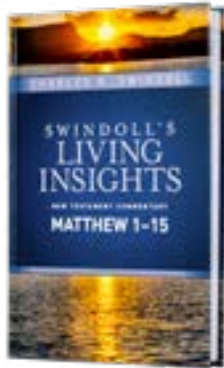
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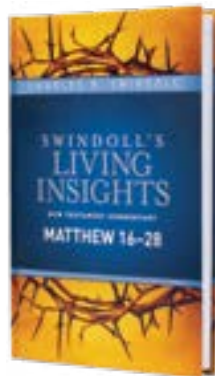
Matthew 2:13–23



Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2021 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Studies, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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