

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Lesson 2**  
**Matthew 2:11 – Matthew 4:25**

**Gifts of the Magi, 4 BC**

**Matthew 2:**<sup>11</sup> After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

In all of the ancient writings, the treasury is a casket or box used to store valuables. In front of the Child, each of the magi opens his casket and presents gold, frankincense or myrrh as a gift to Mary for the Child. Frankincense and myrrh are not natural resources in Babylon, Persia or Iran. Normally, gifts from one king to another are items naturally found or grown in the country of the one giving the gift; therefore, purchased gifts are rarely given to other kings. Gold is found in Babylon, Persia, and Iran so it could have been one of the gifts. However, all three gifts are found in nature in Arabia, Ethiopia, and Spain, three countries mentioned in the prophecy of Psalm 72.

After seeing the new King, the magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod. We can assume that the magi spend the night in Bethlehem and then leave the next morning but do not returning through Jerusalem where their entourage would be easily noticed by Herod.

**Joseph's warning**

**Matthew 2:**<sup>13</sup> Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." <sup>14</sup> So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.<sup>15</sup> <sup>15</sup> He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

Soon after warning the magi, "an angel of the Lord" warns Joseph of the impending danger from Herod. Throughout the Old Testament the characteristics of "the angel of the Lord" always match the characteristics of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must conclude that "the angel of the Lord" was the pre-incarnate Christ. After Mary has conceived the Child, the phrase "the angel of the Lord" is never used again in the Scripture. As found in this passage, a regular angel delivers the messages to the magi and to Joseph after the conception.

To help the Jews come to a belief in the Child as the Savior of the world, Matthew uses a reference in Hosea to substantiate that He is the promised Messiah. The Child is not born in Egypt; He is called out of that country when the time is right.

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<sup>15</sup> Hosea 11:1

## Herod's rage

**Matthew 2:**<sup>16</sup> Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. <sup>17</sup> Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: <sup>18</sup> "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE." <sup>16</sup>

We can only wonder how long it takes Herod to realize that the magi are not returning. His plan has failed so he strikes fear in Bethlehem by having every boy baby two years and under slaughtered. It does not mean that Jesus is two years old when Herod issues the decree; he does not know when the Child was born; he can only assume that He is not older than two years of age.

Herod is a monster and his rage fulfills Jeremiah's prophecy. "Ramah" is the old word for a town near Bethlehem. The prophecy is found in the book of Jeremiah's where he pleads with the Lord to tell him what will ultimately happen to his people, Israel. The Lord pauses to answer his personal questions. Ramah, a city in the land given to Benjamin, will weep within her city walls because of the slaughter of the children. Rachel gave birth to Benjamin, Joseph's brother, in Bethlehem. She died in childbirth with Benjamin and was buried between the two cities. In the Lord's answer to Jeremiah, He uses the name Rachel to represent the mothers in Bethlehem who lose their baby boys in this slaughter.

## Return from Egypt – After April 4 BC

**Matthew 2:**<sup>19</sup> But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." <sup>21</sup> So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

Once again, a regular angelic messenger of the Lord delivers the news to Joseph of Herod's death in Jericho in April of 4 BC.

## New Judean Ruler

**Matthew 2:**<sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, <sup>23</sup> and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. *This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."*

Back in Judea, Joseph and his family make their way to Jerusalem where Jesus is presented in the temple to the delight of both Simeon and Anna. But the news of the newly appointed ruler strikes fear in Joseph's heart and an angel instructs him to take the family up to Nazareth to live; this move fulfills yet another Old Testament prophecy mentioned by Matthew.

When a census, which always includes a tax, is taken in the Roman Empire, the men are required to go to the chief city of their birth line to register. Belonging to the line of Judah, Joseph and Mary must travel to Bethlehem, the chief city of the tribe of Judah. The trip to

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah 31:15

record their names and pay their tax occurs sometime in late December or January of 4 BC. If Jesus was born any earlier than December, He would have been more than 33 ½ years old at His death on April 6<sup>th</sup>, AD 30. His birth and trip to Egypt also have to occur with sufficient time for travel before Herod's death in April of 4 BC.

In his last fit of desperation, Herod changes his will and leaves Archelaus in charge of his Judean kingdom. Archelaus is ruling, but he is not really the king. Caesar has not had time to hear of Herod's death and send back his instructions on the matter. The ships are just beginning to sail after the winter months so even if Caesar has heard, a boat with the instruction could not have arrived yet. Archelaus is the worst of Herod's living sons, feared by all and, for all practical purposes, more heinous than his father.

### **John the Baptist's Message - Repent**

**Matthew 3:**<sup>1</sup> Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." <sup>3</sup>For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE Lord, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"<sup>17</sup>

Thirty years have passed between the last verse of chapter 2 and the first verse of chapter 3.<sup>18</sup> John does not preach in the cities but out in the wilderness near the Jordan River. He has been there preaching his message of repentance for about six months. Matthew is careful to provide the Old Testament passage to prove John is fulfilling prophecy. In Matthew's day, the Jews knew their Scripture and this passage from Jeremiah is important to them.

### **John's Clothing**

**Matthew 3:**<sup>4</sup> Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

John's dress and mannerisms are those of the ancient prophet Elijah. His clothing is made from material woven from camel's hair and his food is that which can be found throughout the Judean hillsides. Consciously or unconsciously, John looks and preaches like the Old Testament prophet, Elijah.<sup>19</sup>

### **Excitement at the Jordan River**

**Matthew 3:**<sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; <sup>6</sup>and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

John does not draw a small crowd; it includes all the inhabitants of Judea. All cities and towns empty when John starts preaching. The synagogues and the temple do not compare with the power of John's message as it booms from his lips. His message is to repent, confess their sins, and be baptized. In Judaism, repentance is completed with a sacrifice; the heart has nothing to do with the process. John's baptism symbolizes the change of heart before God. John's ministry teaches that redemption occurs with a complete

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<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 40:3

<sup>18</sup> Luke 3:1 – 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius or AD 27

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kings 1:8

repentance and change of heart. John's baptism does not bring repentance and forgiveness of sin; it only provides a picture to the world of the inward change.

Baptism is not foreign to Judaism. Gentiles who wanted to convert to Judaism in those days were baptized into the faith; however, a Jew was never baptized because he was born in the faith. John's baptism redirected the purpose of baptism and the religious leaders detested it.

### John attacks religious leaders

**Matthew 3:**<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; <sup>9</sup> and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. <sup>10</sup> "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The two parties of the Sanhedrin rarely unite in a common purpose but they are a strong united force against John the Baptist.<sup>20</sup> These religious leaders have followed the crowd to the riverside where John welcomes the crowd but then verbally attacks the leaders and exposes them for their hypocrisy. The Pharisees are caught up in their hypocritical superstition and the Sadducees are slaves to their carnal unbelief. For both groups, the axe is at the foot of their trees, ready to make the first cut and bring them down.

### John's reference to another man

**Matthew 3:**<sup>11</sup> "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup> "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Turning back to speak to the crowd, John announces the coming of the Lord who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire as He did on the day of Pentecost. When the Lord is finished threshing the harvest, only the good grain will remain; the trash will be burned.

### John refuses Jesus request

**Matthew 3:**<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

Jesus came to the Jordan from His home in Nazareth to be baptized. John knew who He was and why He was on the earth. John also knew He was the Creator and Savior.

### Jesus baptized

**Matthew 3:**<sup>15</sup> But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 16:1

John knows Jesus is sinless, but Jesus prevails because a picture must be portrayed to the world, including the religious leaders hiding in the crowd. All who follow the Lord would need to proclaim to the world repentance of their sin through the baptism.

### Voice out of heaven

**Matthew 3:**<sup>16</sup> After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Matthew does not make it clear whether the Spirit literally descends in the bodily form of a dove or as a metaphor. Luke definitely states that the Spirit descended in the bodily form of a dove.<sup>21</sup> It must have been a beautiful sight.

The voice from heaven is the voice of God the Father announcing the induction of His Son into the ministry. Everyone hears the voice, including the religious leaders who will fight Him for the next three years. It is a wonderful proclamation to the population of Judea.

### Jesus' hunger

**Matthew 4:**<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

From the riverside, Jesus journeys into the wilderness and stays there 40 days. The purpose is for Jesus to be tested, but it does not occur until the 40 days are over and the Lord becomes hungry. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He has the ability to sin as any man, yet He will not sin. Satan always waits until we think we have a real need before he comes with his temptation.

### First temptation - food

**Matthew 4:** <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." <sup>4</sup> But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Because Satan knows Jesus is hungry, he first tempts the Lord with food. Esau's hunger caused him to lose his birthright. David's hunger caused him to eat the shewbread from the temple. But the Lord's hunger will not cause Him to use His Godly power to turn stones into bread. Satan's challenge lures Jesus to lust in His flesh, but Jesus will not sin. The refusal of food is a mere detail in man's obedience to God. The words of Deuteronomy 8:3 prove that point and every Jew should know the Deuteronomy command by heart.

### Second temptation - protection

**Matthew 4:**<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT

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<sup>21</sup> Luke 3:22

AGAINST A STONE.'" <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE Lord YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

Satan then lures Jesus to the top of the temple in Jerusalem to tempt Him with the pride of life. "Throw yourself down ..." and watch the angels save you, Satan says. Jesus uses Deuteronomy 6:16 to rebut Satan. It is another verse that every well-respected Jew should know by heart.

### Third temptation - gift

**Matthew 4:**<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; <sup>9</sup> and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE Lord YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" <sup>11</sup> Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

Finally, Satan takes Jesus to the highest mountain and lures Him with the lust of the eye. He offers Jesus everything He can see. It all belongs to Him anyway, but as a man He will not sin. Jesus turns to Deuteronomy 6:13 and rids Himself of Satan with a verse well-known in Judaism. Once Satan is gone, the three tests are over and the Father sends angels with all the provisions He needs for the moment.

### John the Baptist jailed

**Matthew 4:**<sup>12</sup> Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; <sup>13</sup> and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup> *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>15</sup> "THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI, BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES— <sup>16</sup> "THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED."

Matthew does not mention Jesus' first miracles and ministry in Cana and Nazareth. He records only that which he has actually witnessed, beginning in Capernaum where he is the tax-collector. He mentions Zebulun and Naphtali because of their importance to every Jew as two of the sons of Jacob. Matthew is name-dropping for a purpose. Jesus' ministry fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah and that is important to the Jews for their belief. Jesus' message is a great light in Capernaum out of the dim and oppressive religious hypocrisy of Judea and jealous prejudice of Nazareth's miraculous miracle worker. In the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, the crowd of followers grows into the thousands.

Matthew also fails to include all that has transpired with John and Jesus in Judea, leaving that to the other Gospel writers. However, Matthew does know firsthand that Jesus leaves Judea because of John's arrest. The other Gospels reveal that Jesus leaves the area so Herod will not have to focus on both of them at the same time. With Jesus out of the area, John will decrease in popularity and Jesus will increase. John is fulfilling the purpose of his ministry.

### Jesus preaches - repent

**Matthew 4:**<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

By this time, Jesus has been preaching for over a year. With John out of the ministry, Jesus includes his message about the importance of repentance and the nearness of the kingdom of heaven for the Jews.

### **Peter and Andrew**

**Matthew 4:**<sup>18</sup> Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." <sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

The crowds following Jesus are already large on the day He invites Peter and Andrew to follow as a disciple. They had met Him a year earlier at the Jordan with John the Baptist. Andrew met Jesus first and then he ran to find his brother Peter to tell him the good news. Now, they cast their nets into the sea and follow the Lord that day with all the rest. Jesus has not asked them to be apostles yet. It will happen in about six months.

### **James and John**

**Matthew 4:**<sup>21</sup> Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. <sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Just down the seashore, Jesus invites James and John to follow Him just as He did Andrew and Peter. James and John had also met Jesus the year before. They were baptized by John the Baptist and were faithful followers until they needed to go back home to fish for a living with their father. When Jesus calls them, they leave their father in the boat and join the huge crowd.

### **The growing multitude**

**Matthew 4:**<sup>23</sup> Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

The other Gospels tell of all the Lord's ministry in detail, but Matthew chooses just to summarize the work in one paragraph. From Galilee to Syria, to the ten cities of Decapolis, to Jerusalem, to Judea and all along the east side of the Jordan River, thousands of Jews come to follow the Lord as He ministers to their every need.

Jesus is in Galilee for His first of three ministry tours. During this tour, He specifically calls four men to be followers. On the second tour He will choose His 12 apostles. On the final tour He will send the 12 out with the power to do everything He can do. But now it is time for the Lord to sit down on the hillside and teach the multitude through the great Sermon on the Mount.