

**Joseph Takes Jesus into Protective Custody & Evacuates Bethlehem for Egypt, Matt 2:14; Documenting the Death of Herod in 1 B.C., v. 15; Joseph Not Only Had the Davidic Bloodline but also the Integrity to Be Legal Father of Jesus; Jesus Was Prophesied to Come out from Egypt, Hosea 11:1**

In verse 14, however, it is imperative that Jesus be completely out of Herod's jurisdiction. The urgency of the departure to Egypt is brought out by the nominative masculine article **ὁ (ho)** translated "The one," referring to Joseph who is the subject of two verbs: (1) the aorist active indicative of **παραλαμβάνω (paralambanō)**, "to take," and (2) the aorist active indicative of **ἀναχωρέω (anachōreō)**, "to leave."

When the verse states that Joseph "took the Child and His mother," the verb takes on an intensive connotation. The literal meaning of *paralambanō* is emphasized: "To take near, with, or to oneself. To seize or take into one's possession ... as an associate or companion."<sup>1</sup>

Gabriel's warning alerts Joseph of immediate danger to his Child. He is entrusted by God with responsibility for the Messiah and His mother. The angel's mandate transforms him from caretaker and provider over to the divinely appointed agent to take the Boy and His mother into protective custody.

Once all was organized for their departure, the verse states that "he left for Egypt," the third person singular of *anachōreō* which usually means "to depart," or "to retire." But the context indicates urgency in the face of danger, a concept addressed in this excerpt:

**The Christian ἀναχωρηταί were those who "fled" from the world—"retire" is too weak for ἀναχωρέω. The connotation of "taking refuge" from some peril will suit most of the New Testament passages remarkably well.<sup>2</sup>**

In light of the fact that the clear and present danger to the Messiah is from the highest ranking angel on the dark side of the angelic conflict, the best and most appropriate verb to use is "to evacuate," defined as follows by Webster's:

**Evacuate: to remove especially from a military zone or dangerous area; to withdraw from a place in an organized way especially for protection.<sup>3</sup>**

With these things in mind here is the corrected translation for:

**Matthew 2:14** - So Joseph got up and took to himself in protective custody the Child and His mother and, while it was still night, evacuated to Egypt. (CTL)

**v. 15** - 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." (NASB)

The first sentence of verse 15 contains a critical piece of information which if correctly dated provides the major clue to determining the time of Jesus' birth and the period of time one must consult to locate the celestial phenomenon defined by the Magi as "His star" (Matthew 2:2).

<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, "παραλαμβάνω *paralambanō*," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), 1108.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Moulton and G. Mulligan, "ἀναχωρέω," in *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: "evacuate."

We addressed these issues in the paragraph “The Mystery of the Star,” but they bear repeating here. Verses 15 and 19 confirm that Jesus was alive when Herod died. We have documented that the virgin birth of our Lord occurred on June 17, 2 B.C. He was six-months old when the Magi arrived in Jerusalem in late December of 2 B.C.

This means that Herod was alive in the year 1 B.C. during a period of time that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were exiled in Egypt. The determination of precisely when Herod died is the subject of this excerpt from Jack Finegan’s revised edition of *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*:

The widely accepted dating of the death of Herod the Great (is) 4 (or possibly 5) B.C. W. E. Filmer raised a serious question about the 4 B.C. date and proposed a date in 1 B.C. instead, and in 1978 and 1996 Ernest L. Martin advanced detailed arguments for the same date of 1 B.C. The subject of the date of Herod’s death was thus brought to the front again, and much discussion has ensued. (p. 298)

Josephus tells us that an eclipse of the moon took place shortly before Herod died, and that the Jewish Passover came not long after his death.

If the death of Herod is placed in 4 B.C. the eclipse in question can be identified with a partial lunar eclipse on March 12/13, allowing twenty-nine days until the Passover on April 11. Or if the death of Herod is placed in 5 B.C. the eclipse can be identified with a total lunar eclipse on September 15/16, allowing some seven months until Passover on April 17, 5 B.C. **If the death of Herod was in 1 B.C.—the year we are now exploring as probable for the death of Herod—the relevant eclipse of the moon was a total eclipse on the night of January 9/10, and the full paschal moon of Nisan 14 was on April 8, [7 on the Gentile calendar] twelve and a half weeks later.**<sup>4</sup> (p. 299)

In the last period of Herod’s life, between the eclipse shortly before he died and the Passover soon after his death, Josephus narrates many events. These are the following: (1) on the night of the eclipse Herod had two rabbis burned alive for involvement in the destruction of his golden eagle at the temple gate; (2) with his health worsening he traveled from Jericho to the hot baths of Callirrhoe lka-lir’-ra-wē \ near the northeast end of the Dead Sea, (3) when numerous baths and additional immersion in a vat of warm oil failed to bring relief he returned to Jericho; (4) at Jericho, knowing that death was near and being well aware that most of the Jewish people hated him, he sent officers into all areas of his kingdom to bring prominent Jewish elders to Jericho where he had them shut up in the hippodrome with instructions that upon his demise they be executed; (5) receiving a letter from Augustus allowing him to either exile or execute his son Antipater, Herod sent his bodyguards to do the latter; (6) he then altered his will and designated Archelaus to have Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Antipas to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; and Philip to be tetrarch of Gaulanitis and related regions; and (7) on the fifth day after having Antipater killed, he died.

<sup>4</sup> “Herod ... burnt ... Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon [January 9/10, 1 B.C.]. This eclipse of the moon is of the greatest consequence for the determination of the time of the death of Herod ... and for the birth and entire chronology of Jesus Christ” (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, nd], 514). “Herod ... appointed Antipas ... to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and granted the kingdom to Archelaus. He also gave Gaulonitis [*sic*], and Trachonitis, and Paneas [*sic*] to Philip. When he had done these things, he died” (Ibid., 516). “Now, upon the approach of that feast of unleavened bread, which the law of their fathers had appointed for the Jews at this time, which feast is called the Passover [April 8, 1 B.C.], and is a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, the seditious lamented ... Matthias” (Ibid., 518).

It is plain that it would have been difficult for all this to transpire within the twenty-nine days between the eclipse of March 12/13 and the Passover of April 11 in the year 4 B.C. The seven months in 5 B.C. would of course be more than sufficient, but that date is not otherwise strongly supported. In 1 B.C. the time would be adequate and not excessive, and this fact is an additional reason for preferring the 1 B.C. date for the death of Herod the Great.<sup>5</sup> (p. 300)

From this analysis by Finegan we can postulate that Herod died circa February or March of 1 B.C. This would make the Lord's age to be about nine months. According to Matthew 2:19, it was immediately after Herod's death that Gabriel ordered Joseph to take Mary and Jesus and depart for Israel. Joseph had left Judea in December of 2 B.C. not knowing how long his exile to Egypt would last. The critical issue was Herod's plot to kill Jesus which is indicated in verse 13, but Joseph had no way of knowing how long Herod would live.

The evacuation to the safety of Egypt and the resultant return to Israel resulted in the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy found in:

**Hosea 11:1** - When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. (NASB)

It is clear that the text identifies "My son" as "Israel." However, Matthew gives it a second interpretation which he is free to do under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The two ideas coalesce as is evident from this excerpt from Charles L. Feinberg:

In the first ten chapters of the prophecy of Hosea, the emphasis has been on the disobedience of God's people and the inevitable judgment as a consequence. The dominant note and chord in the last four chapters of the book is the love of God.

When God would speak of His infinite love for the nation Israel, He shows that it had its beginning when they were being formed into a nation through the fiery crucible of Egyptian bondage. From her earliest history God loved Israel; He says so. He loves sovereignly with boundless love, and loves because He loves.<sup>6</sup>

This love motivated God to liberate His people from Egyptian slavery. They are called not only "child," but "my son" as well. (See Exodus 4:22.) This bespeaks a covenant relationship, which can never be dissolved. They are to this hour beloved of God for the Father's sake (Romans 11:28).

If we turn to the New Testament we find this passage is quoted in Matthew 2:15 of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who was wrong? Hosea or Matthew? Neither, for both were moved by the same Spirit to give us an inerrant record. Hosea calls Israel "my son" and Matthew calls the Lord Jesus "my son." The answer is to be found in the wonderful way in which Christ identifies Himself with His people, so that His position is theirs and His relationship is theirs. (p. 54)

More than once Israel and the Messiah are viewed together, as though to form a composite picture. Read Isaiah 49:3 for an example.

**Isaiah 49:3** - God said to Me, "You [ Messiah ] are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory." (NASB)

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<sup>5</sup> Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 298–300.

<sup>6</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, "Hosea: God's Love for Israel," in *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1948), 54.

In that passage Isaiah is giving us the second of the Servant Songs leading up to the climax of Isaiah 53. He has been speaking clearly of the Messiah and then calls Him "Israel." We do remember that the Messiah and Israel are inseparably and eternally bound together in the bundle of life in the Lord our God.<sup>7</sup> (pp. 54–55)

The family of Israel went into Egypt made up of twelve sons and their families. They emerged over 400 years later as a nation of two million people made up of twelve tribes, their first-born sons having escaped Pharaoh's murderous wrath by means of the blood of the sacrificial Paschal lamb that signaled the destroyer angel to "pass over" their homes (Exodus 12:7; 12–13).

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<sup>7</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, "Hosea: God's Love for Israel," in *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1948), 54–55.