

## **Good News Comes 'Out of Egypt'**

Matthew 2:13–15 | 12.11.2016 | The Promised One @OBC

**Egypt.** Whether in the Bible or in the news, Egypt is a country plagued by unrest.

### **In the news . . .**

Egypt, since 2011, has gained international press because of its political violence.

As we prayed for the nation today, the Christians in that country face a barrage of intimidation and false accusations, some being imprisoned or killed.

There are many Muslim converts to Christianity in Egypt, but such allegiance with Christ comes at a high cost.

Indeed, what happens today in Egypt today repeats events recorded in the Bible.

### **In the Bible . . .**

Egypt first shows up as a man's name in the genealogy of **Genesis 10**.

From this man came a powerful people that play a significant role in Scripture.

First, in **Genesis 12**, Abraham took refuge in Egypt during a famine.

Next, at the end of Genesis, they became the country where Joseph was enslaved.

Then, like Abraham, Israel and his twelve sons fled to Egypt to avoid another famine.

Sadly, their status as privileged refugees soon turns into oppressed slaves.

By Exodus, Israel has grown to a couple million, but still they are enslaved . . . **Do you see a pattern?** . . . Egypt & slavery go together like Eggnog & Santa

Only Israel is not only Pharaoh's slave . . . according to Ezekiel 20 they have also enslaved themselves to the idol worship of that country.

From this terrible plight, they cry out to God . . . God hears them. He sends a deliverer . . . and for the rest of the Bible . . . this Exodus from Egypt becomes a promise and pattern for the way God saves his people.

### **Now . . . you may be asking: What has Egypt to do with Bethlehem / birth of Jesus?**

If you listen to our Christmas music . . . you might think: Not much.

But in fact, a key story in the birth narratives of Jesus identifies Christ by his flight to Egypt and then his return from Egypt.

And this morning we look at that story in Matthew 2:13–15 to see how Matthew identifies WHO Jesus is and HOW this flight promises salvation to you and I.

As we've seen over the last 2 weeks, Matthew writes his Gospel with the ink of the OT.

It's like . . . he dips his quill in the ink wells of Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea, and then explains the events of Jesus birth from the history of Israel and hopes of its people.

In fact, in vv. 13–15, we find a very short and simple account of Jesus' movement from Bethlehem to Egypt,

But what is extraordinary . . . is how / why Matthew quotes Hosea to explain this move.

So this morning, our study of Matthew 2:13–15 makes three moves.

1. First . . . We will consider the historical events in Jesus' flight out of Israel.
2. Second . . . We will consider why Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1.
3. Third . . . we will see how this prophetic word fits . . . and actually shapes . . . Matthew's Gospel. . . and then how it secures hope in the person and work of Christ.

So three steps

1. Into the text . . . what happened in Jesus early life
2. Before the text . . . what Hosea tells us
3. After the text . . . how it applies to us today

And just to let you know . . . we will spend most of our time in Hosea

If you are familiar with that book – great.

If not . . . that's even better, because you'll get a look at this powerful OT prophet

## The Flight to Egypt

Verse 13 begins with the departure of the Magi = “now when they had departed.”

In real time . . . this would have been within two months after the birth of Christ.

If the Magi’s departure for Bethlehem coincided with his birth, and it took about 30–40 days to arrive in Bethlehem, the events of verses 13–15 took place within two months.

Verse 13 says Herod is about to search for the Christ child.

Apparently, he expected a short return of the Magi, but because an angel told them to go home another way they did not return to Jerusalem (v. 12).

So, to use a technical term, Herod is FREAKING OUT. His paranoid rage is boiling over, and within days he would send troops to kill all children under two.

Verses 16–18 cover that horrible massacre, and we’ll consider next week.

For now . . . It’s worth noting that verses 13–21 should be read together.

The center of these verses is verse 16, when Herod seeks to kill the children.

Standing on either side of this fit of rage, are two passages – one from Hosea 11 associating Herod’s cruelty with that of Pharaoh and the Exodus, one from Jeremiah 31 associating his bloodshed with the violence of Babylon and the Exile.

Together, these two verses (v. 15 + v. 17–18) are meant to help explain and interpret the birth of Jesus and the violence of Herod in light of the EXODUS and EXILE.

Then standing outside of these two quotations, we find God using dreams to lead Joseph to protect his son.

At the edge of this section, we find entrance and exit from Egypt. Verse 13 speaks of Jesus’ arrival in that place of refuge; verse 20–21 speak of his return to Israel.

So, we can see how Matthew is holding this whole section together:

He begins with Joseph leading his family out of Israel to Egypt

This is explained by **Hosea 11**

Herod comes and slaughters the innocent children

This is explained by **Jeremiah 31**

Then when Herod dies, Joseph is again led by a dream to return to Israel

If this were a different sermon, we might look at the whole section,

But today we are focusing on verses 13–15: The historical flight to Egypt and Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1 to explain its meaning.

So, verses 13–15a give us a very straight-forward historical account of Jesus movements:

- v. 13 The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said: “Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.”

The **command** is simple = Rise, take . . . flee

The **source** [the angel of the Lord] is remarkable, but not unusual in Scripture.

And the **reason** is plain: “Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.”

So verse 13 gives us the reason for verse 14–15:

- v. 14 “And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt <sup>15</sup> and -15 remained there until the death of Herod.”

Egypt was outside of Herod’s jurisdiction. It was a place where the people of Israel had found refuge before – one thinks of Abraham in Gen 12 or Israel in Genesis 37–50.

Thus, with the provision of the Magi and the imperative of the angel, Joseph obeys. And the wave of Herod’s wrath is avoided by days, if not hours.

**These are the facts Matthew gives us. And they leave us wanting more.**

Matthew could have been more specific about the **angel of the Lord**, but he wasn’t.

He could have spent his time talking about **Herod** and his violent paranoia. This is the stuff History Channel loves to tell. But not Matthew.

Or, he could have made Joseph a model father, leader, or spiritual leader. Family Christian bookstore would love to sell books about that, but not Matthew.

**No . . . Matthew is not like us.**

He doesn’t get stuck in speculation about angels and supernatural encounters.

He doesn’t waste his time debating politics.

He doesn’t focus on Joseph’s pious leadership or write pithy devotional literature.

Instead, he gives simple details about Jesus flight to Egypt and then pulls in a verse non one was expecting: **“This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “. . .**

What? What does this mean? Why does he quote this verse?

**Hos 11:1** was not listed in any Jewish catalog of messianic verses. What is he doing?

If you ask that question, you are in good company. There are many who have charged Matthew with misreading the OT, wrongly using Hosea 11:1.

I don’t think so. I believe Matthew knows exactly what he is doing. And we should go back to Hosea to see why Matthew is applying this passage to Jesus.

## Honing in on Hosea

If you are familiar with Hosea at all, you may remember that it begins with the strange command for the prophet of the Lord, Hosea, to marry a woman of the night.

- 1:1 Hosea is real person, a prophet called by God during the final days of the divided kingdom. Somewhere in the middle of the eighth century BC (746 – 727 BC)
- 1:2 Sets the stage for the book, as God commands Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom . . . READ

In this verse, Yahweh calls Hosea to serve as a living parable for Israel.

Just as God “married” Israel in his covenant with them at Sinai,  
but Israel committed adultery by chasing false gods.  
. . . So Hosea is called to marry Gomer, a harlot, and to have children with her – some  
of whom may not even be his own.

This is how the book begins.

For the first 3 chapters, Hosea & Gomer take center stage.

The prophet lives out an allegory / living parable . . . where he represents God’s redeeming love to an unfaithful wife.

The first two chapters trace the adulterous actions of Gomer, and the fruit of her unfaithfulness . . . three children whose names signify God’s judgment on Israel.

### Excursus

In chapter 1, we see how their children serve as signs.

The first child is named Jezreel: he is a sign of God’s judgment on the house of Israel for the way they, since Jehu’s reign, aligned themselves with foreign nations.

The second child is named No Mercy, a clear indication of God’s judgment on Israel.

The third child’s name is Not My People, another sign of God’s displeasure for Israel.

This is ch. 1. Chapter 2 turns the nation of Israel, represented as an unfaithful harlot.

He tells Hosea to tell the nation of their wickedness and their judgment, but consider the kind of speech Hosea must have had – in the mouth of a man ripped apart by his wife’s unfaithfulness, do you think he was blasting away in his condemnation?

No . . . his strong words of judgment came from a man broken by an unfaithful wife. In this way, the Lord communicates his anger tintured by incredible sorrow.

In fact, the judgment that Israel deserves comes with promise of mercy.

Chapter 2 is a good example of how all the prophets work – they preach a message of justice and mercy, salvation and judgment.

Yet . . . for all her sin . . . God tells Hosea to buy back his bride.

**Why?** Because this is what God is going to do for his people.  
**Look at 2:14 – 23** . . . READ

On the other side of God's judgment, God will have mercy.

After the exile earned by their sin, God is going to re-plant Jezreel.  
He is going to have mercy on those called No Mercy  
He will make his own those who people whose sin had disqualified them.

### **Do you see what he is promising?**

He is promising a new covenant that will come through a new exodus.

To the people sent into exile he will bring back a remnant to bear fruit for his name.

### **And how will that covenant come about?**

Look at chapter 3 . . . The first three verses are for Hosea; the next two for Israel.

**READ vv 1–3** – Again Hosea's life is a living parable of for God himself.  
. . . What God tells Hosea to do reveal God's own plan of redemption.

Which is what verses 4–5 are all about: **READ** . . .  
. . . God promises a day when his people will return to him.

### **And how will they return to God ??**

To call in Isaiah: God's servant will provide a sacrifice for sin.  
To quote from Joel: He will pour out his Spirit.  
To cross-reference Ezekiel: God will cause them to walk in his ways.  
To borrow from Jeremiah 31: God will write his law on their hearts.

In short, as all the Prophets foretell . . . God's people will come in faith and repentance, because God will empower them with the Spiritual power of his Son.

And notice, who is this Son?

If you say Jesus . . . you are right. But you are cheating :-)

In the 8<sup>th</sup> C BC . . . no one knows of Mary and Joseph and the baby born in a stable.

But they do know their hope is found in a king from the line of David.

And after a time without a king (v. 4), God will give them a new David.

Not the physical son of Jesse—he's been dead for 200 years.

But someone like David, . . . who will bring in an everlasting kingdom.

This is how the first three chapters of Hosea begin and they set up the rest of the book.

And if you are familiar with the OT prophets, they fit with the messianic hope that is ever-present and growing in the years around the exile.

God is going to bring judgment on Israel (and later Judah) because of their spiritual adultery, law-breaking, and self-reliance.

First, he will use Assyria to come and wipe them out.

And later, he will raise up Babylon to deport his people from Jerusalem.

**And this is the point of Hosea 4–14 . . .**

God is going to bring judgment on Israel . . . He's going to send his people into exile

But . . . and this is a big but . . . this exile will not result in absolute loss.

After exile in the Promised Land . . . he promises a new exodus.

Which brings us to Hosea 11.

**After chapters 4–10 indict Israel for a myriad of sins . . . the first word of hope comes in**

Hosea 11:1 . . . Hosea 11:1 – the passage Matthew quotes – is the place where God recalls his previous work of redemption – the redemption he promised in Hosea 2–3.

And what we find in **11:1–11** is that Egypt plays a prominent role in that redemption.

So we need to look carefully at these verses.

**But before that we would be in error . . . if we didn't stop to consider**

If you find yourself suffering from sin – your sin or someone else's sin . . .

If you feel exiled from God because you have pursued other gods . . .

If you abandoned the Lord to pursue your own path . . .

The message of Bible is that God has made a way for your return.

He has sent his Son to come and save you from your sin, to return you from exile, . . . to establish you in a new covenant and to redeem you with his love.

**Don't miss this word . . .** we seek to understand Matthew and Hosea because we marvel at this amazing fact: the holy God of heaven has come to earth to dwell with us

To bring children enslaved to sin to experience: **Out of Egypt I have called my son**

**So . . . let's look for God's redemption in action!**

In Hosea 11,

the Lord reaches back to Egypt as the place where he had redeemed Israel in the past, and now he's making promises to do it again!

But not only does Hosea reach back to Egypt in Hosea 11:1, he also looks ahead to a new exodus coming in the future . . . just like we saw in Hosea 2 – 3 .

Significantly, **Egypt** plays a part in this future redemption, as it is mentioned in v. 5, 11

And from these 3 mentions of Egypt (v. 1, 5, 11) . . . we will find a way of redemption

. . . that starts with Israel coming OUT of Egypt

. . . then Israel going back INTO Egypt

. . . and then finally in the future Israel coming OUT of Egypt again

This is the pattern in Hosea 11:1–11 . . . the one Matthew copies in his Gospel

. . . the one that identifies who Jesus is and what he has come to do.

## 1. Out of Egypt

You may know this . . . that “Son” is a word given to Israel in Exodus 4:22–23.

There, God says to Moses: **“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”**

This explains the mention in Hosea 11:1 – **Out of Egypt, I have called my SON.**

In fact, verses 1–4 recount the wrestling match God has had with his son Israel. **READ**

God brought his son out of Egypt to lavish his love on him, but because his son refused to obey . . . refused to listen . . . did things his own way . . . he had to punish

**Children** . . . (young and old). . . please hear this . . . God as a loving father disciplined his son because he kept doing what he was told not to do.

God could not bless Israel, because his son refused to obey.

And so God sends his son into exile. **This is the point of vv. 5–7.**

Verse 1 . . . tells us that God calls his son FROM Egypt

Verse 5 . . . tells us that God is putting his son back INTO Egypt, only Egypt is not the nation-state Egypt, but rather the nation-state of Assyria . . .

. . . who is functioning as a new Egypt.



## 2. Into Egypt

In the ESV . . . verse 5 reads . . . READ

There is debate about how verse 5 should be translated . . .

NIV:	Will they not return to Egypt ??
NET:	They will return to Egypt . . .
ESV/NAS/LXX:	They shall not return to the land of Egypt . .

### Which is it?

I am most persuaded by ESV's translation, as the LXX confirms this translation, saying that Israel will not return to Egypt.

But even if you read it the other way, they shall return to Egypt . . . the context makes clear...

**. . . God is sending his people back into slavery... only not to Egypt, but Assyria**

Whereas Israel suffered under the oppression of Pharaoh and Egypt before, now they will suffer under a new oppressor, a New Egypt – Assyria.

The whole of Hosea is written with this threat in view.

And we know this is the intention of verse 5, because of verses 6–7. **READ**

God has appointed Israel's judgment and they will be sent into captivity.  
Assyria will be their **new Egypt** . . . and they will suffer mightily because of their sin.

## 3. From Egypt

But we are not through. **Verses 8–9** speak of God's tender mercy. READ vv. 8–10a.

One might think God is fickle here . . . but that misunderstands his heart.

God's judgment is necessary because of sin, but ultimately God will do good to his ppl

As Lord Almighty, he will change their hearts and will cause them to follow him.

The assurance of verse 10 "they will follow the LORD" is reference to the new covenant. It has to be. The OC had no power to circumcise the heart. Israel went astray because the blood of bulls and goats could not cleanse the conscience.

But the NC, described in Hosea 2–3, comes with power to make sinners follow God with their whole hearts. Therefore, when he roars . . . his children will come home.

This is what he gets at in verses 10b–11 . . . READ

Notice where they come home from: From Egypt.

So to complete the circle in Hosea . . .

First, we see the historical reference to God bringing his son out of Egypt  
Next, we see the judgment of God sending his son back into Assyria, a New Egypt  
Last, we see the promise that one day in the future God will call his son once again from Egypt . . . and settle him / **them** in their homes.

Out of Egypt . . . Into Egypt . . . Out of Egypt Again

**Now . . . Fast forward to the time of Matthew . . .**

The nation of Israel has returned to their land . . . but they are still under threat.

Exile has ended in one sense . . . but not in another.

There is no Davidic king on the throne. Righteousness and peace are lacking.

Herod, as we will soon see, is as violent as any Pharaoh or ruler in ruler in Assyria.

In truth, Israel is their land, but in another sense, they're still in Egypt.

And then, to make matters worse . . . the priests of Israel just like in Hosea 4–10 are not leading the people into righteousness . . .

Rather . . . when they learn of Jesus' birth, they stay in Jerusalem . . .

Are they uninterested in the Christ child?

Or are they unwilling to give up their positions of influence? Or both?

Whatever the case . . . Israel is in need of redemption . . . they need a new exodus.

And Matthew writes his Gospel to show that the promised son of David has come to be their king . . . a king who will identify himself w/ their plight and lead them home.

This is why I believe Matthew quotes from Hosea 11:1 . . . to show the remnant of Israel that their own nation has become Egypt . . . full of violence or idol worship.

But just as God sent a deliverer to Egypt of old . . . so now he is sending a true son of Israel to deliver his people from Egypt again.

And this sets up (solves) one of the biggest questions about Matthew's use of Hosea:

Why does Matthew put Hosea 11:1 in verse 15 after Joseph departs *to* Egypt, . . . instead of after verse 21 when he truly comes *out of* Egypt?

**Do you see the anomaly?**

**Verse 14** says that the holy family departed *to* Egypt . . . not that it came *out of* Egypt.  
**Is there any significance to this?** I think so . . .

When God called his son out of Egypt, he was saving him from a Pharaoh's violence.

In Matthew, the same thing is happening. Herod, the governor in Judea, serves as new blood-thirsty Pharaoh, seeking to kill the children of Israel – **vv. 16–18**

Thus, Joseph escapes Israel, not as God's promised land, but Israel as filled with violence, law-breaking, and political intrigue.

As one commentator puts it,

"Israel is cast as metaphorical "Egypt," the place of captivity and death for Yahweh's people, while geographical Egypt is the place of temporary refuge." (NP, 120)

Indeed, like Joseph in Genesis who found security from the rage of his brothers in Egypt, so now the father of Jesus leads his son into Egypt until the threat is over.

Like Assyria taking Egypt's role in oppressing God's people in Hosea 11:5, now Jerusalem is doing the same. They are a new Egypt threatening God's Son.

Instead of protecting Jesus from Herod, the priests and scribes are in league with him.

In **Matthew 2:6** they pointed the cruel ruler to his birthplace.

In **Matthew 2:19** we learn there were multiple people seeking the child's life – this could be the Roman soldiers only . . . but it very well could include the scribes and Pharisees . . .

Put into context then . . . I believe Matthew intentionally puts Hosea 11:1 after Jesus departure *from Judea* to show how this flight to Egypt sets up the pattern of redemption laid out in Hosea 11.

Just as the Son of God was brought out of Israel, which has become a New Egypt,

He was brought into Egypt . . . to identify himself with God's exiled people.

In order at the right time . . . to come out of Egypt again . . . and deliver his people

By paying close attention to the foot traffic of Hosea 11 and Matthew 2:13–21, we find the same pattern – OUT of Egypt, INTO Egypt, and OUT of Egypt again.

For the well-schooled disciple of the Hebrew Bible . . . which was audience to whom Matthew wrote. . . this exposition of Hosea 11 would have powerfully identified Jesus as the Son of Israel sent by God to redeem Israel from their captivity.

Indeed, this is the whole point of Matthew's Gospel . . . to lead us to marvel at what God did in Christ's early life to show how he fulfilled all his promises with perfect precision and care.

And what about us?

God is providing the same redemption for you . . . if you are trusting in Christ

**Or . . . if you are not trusting in Christ, this is what he wants to do for you.**

He wants to bring you out of Egypt . . . through his Son who knows the way.

It's enlightening to see how Egypt works throughout the Bible

First, it was the place of captivity where Israel suffered under cruel oppression, even as they worshiped the idols of Egypt.

Then, it became a metaphor for judgment . . . the place God would send his people if they rebelled. This is what we saw in Hosea 11:5.

Then, it became a metaphor of hope and redemption . . . which is what Hosea communicates in v. 1, 11.

Finally, Egypt became a greater historical reality in the infancy of Christ.

Jesus came out of Egypt to find refuge in Egypt in order to leave Egypt again . . . so that he might bring redemption to Israel . . . and through Israel to you and I.

Incidentally, Egypt is one of the nations mentioned in Acts 2, Day of Pentecost. |

**The only question remaining is . . . have you come out of Egypt?**

As an adult Jesus spoke to Moses – literally spoke to Moses – about Jesus Exodus.

Like Moses, Jesus would lead an exodus, but it would not be a migration of people across the Red Sea . . . it would be an exodus from death to resurrection life.

Here in the birth story of Jesus, Matthew identifies Jesus in the same way.

Jesus was born not to give us a holiday . . . but to give us certain hope of eternal life.

This is what we celebrate at Christmas . . . that in the exile of our sin, Jesus has come as the way out. **He is the Good News out of Egypt! . . . [There's nothing better]**

And in Christ, then, God is calling us to walk the same path . . . as children redeemed by the blood of Christ . . . restored from the exile of sin, death, and suffering. |

**Friend . . . if you come to Christmas with heaviness in your heart**

This news story coming out of Egypt is Wonderful . . . it is the best news.

It is the promise that to people suffering in places like Egypt . . . God has a way out

**Will you flee to him . . . find refuge in him?** This is why he came . . .