

The Gospel of
Matthew 2:11b-23

To Egypt... A Vivid Contrast



11b – “...*gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh*”

Gold – this represented security/protection.

This would be required to be secure in a foreign land.



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Q: But when is God not safe?

God’s Son was subjected to many unsafe situations.

When He was older, He could protect Himself.

When He was a baby, however, it was a different story. He needed protection! He was fully human!

Gold ensured protection. God was securing His Son’s future. Salvation history depended upon it!

Incense (Frankincense) -

There is a lot of speculation about the symbolism of these gifts. If I read Matthew right, the intent of the author was to prove the legitimacy of the Messiah-ship of Jesus. He continually quotes Old Testament passages that point to the Messiah. The meaning of these gifts may be as simple as the fulfillment of prophecy. **[Isa. 60:1-6]**



But I need to go back to the fact that these gifts were also God's provision. The value the gifts represented here brought this family into a new income level - certainly moving them out of poverty! The only thing they had to worry about after this was theft! As they fled into Egypt, they were able to purchase what they needed to survive. These resins were highly sought after in Egypt as they were used in the embalming process, and would have commanded exorbitant prices. If some remained when they returned, they would also command high prices in Jerusalem because they were also used in the Jerusalem temple for burning as incense. With all the butchering of animals that went on there, incense would have been needed!



Vs 12 – “... *having been warned in a dream...*” –

Having been a part of honoring the King of Kings with rich gifts, they were protected by God from going back to Herod and unwittingly becoming a part of his plot to kill the True King. They were actually endangering themselves by not going back to Herod, so, as they exited the country out the back way, they hurried to get out of range of Herod’s reach!



God protects those that have given themselves to Him.



In a world of thieves threatening His own, He zealously guards those who are truly His!

He does it in any number of ways. If there is no other option that will serve His

purposes well, He has sent His angel(s) in person, in dreams, or visions, with a message or some other kind of intervention. After treating the magi to the incredible spectacle of His Only Begotten Son, God was not going to let them go back to the enemy! He is protective of His own and protective of His plan!

The author felt this called for another O.T. proof text proving that every twist of the story was all foretold by God so that we could know who the Messiah was when He came!

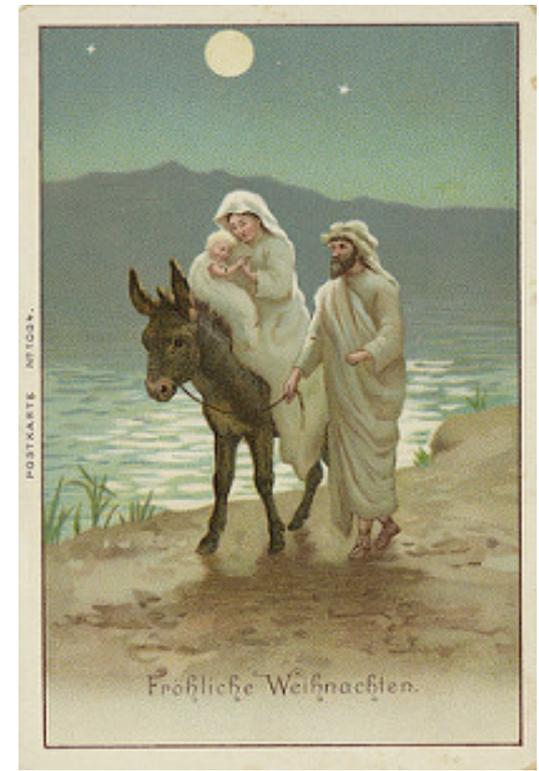
Even the indescribably evil event that came next was foretold. Did God cause it? Absolutely not. But He used it! Herod had rejected God. This great evil indicates a human-caused absence of God! He gives humans what they desire. He will withdraw and leave us to our own devices. His withdrawal is a *curse*! This whole tragedy came about because God was banished from the life of Herod. In fact, they oppose God fiercely if He gets in the way of their own interests. They will absolutely do as they please! If someone tells them they can't, that is exactly what they will do. Herod was only protecting his own self interests. He had been crossing the line for years. Now he just crossed it a little further. It is estimated that about 20–35 babies were snuffed out that fateful day. It is possible that the parents were told to keep their mouths shut or the assassins would come back and kill them all. This infamous event is not recorded anywhere else in history. But given the fact that there were many people that were contemporaries of the story still alive there's no way it was just made up



Vs. 13 - “*Get up,.. and escape to Egypt*”

God had used Egypt before to nurture and preserve His own people. When the Hebrews were just a large family, they were “driven” by a great drought to move to Egypt. There they were invited to stay in a stable and protected environment. They were protected there until they could grow into a full-fledged nation, large enough where it was safe to emerge and be greeted by a predatory and territorial cluster of Middle Eastern nations! Now God would again use Egypt to protect His Son and His family until it was safe for them to leave.

Mary and Joseph may have left suddenly alone in the night but they would have been looking for a caravan of traders to join up with. It would have been a weeks-long, dangerous, and exhausting trip.



*We have been treated to a unprecedented dose of piggish human behavior for the last 3 or 4 weeks, as the “me too” movement has taken hold and women in **Hollywood**, in **politics**, in **pro and amateur sports**, in **television**, in **big business**, in **medicine**, in **science**, the **universities**, in the **courts**, and even in **the church**, have been coming forward with their stories of the boorish, perverted behavior of powerful men behind closed doors! Powerful women have been accused too! There are two or three new stories in the news every night! There are hundreds, maybe thousands more, I’m sure, that are shaking in their boots waiting for the ax to fall on them and praying it won’t. They know they are guilty as sin! What complicates it greatly is the fact that there are many accusers who have joined the chorus for reasons of their own, and are falsely accusing, or looking for financial settlements, or getting revenge on their bosses and supervisors, coaches, or handlers! I’m telling you, the human condition is such that in the absence of God, when we have kicked Him we are capable of descending deep into *ANY* evil or perversion of normal human behavior, stepping from one evil thing into an even lower and more evil thing, and from there going *ever lower*!



Why is this dark story included in the account? I had a conversation with my brother the other night about this. Let me tell you what he told me. He said to think of it this way. He said that if you go to Best Buy, you can find the newest in TV technology called OLED TV. Its brights are brighter than the current LED blacks are made material called polytube material seven and ½ times than copper and has strength of steel. It emits no light at all, making it darker than pitch black. If you were wearing a dress made of this material, head and whatever appendages were not covered by the material - would look disembodied, like they were attached to the edge of an empty blackest black hole in the shape of a woman's body but absolutely void of any discernable features. Oh, the normal wrinkles are there in the fabric. You can feel them, but you just can't see them.



TVs because it's blacker by a new "Vantablack". It is a that conducts heat more effectively 10x the tensile

In TV technology, if they include a layer of this material it creates a much starker contrast between light and darkness, therefore sharpening the picture – actually a great deal!

The point is: I think the Spirit of God inspired the writer here to include this bleak picture of extreme cruelty and the awful darkness of the human condition in the middle of the sweet nativity story to show us the extreme, the vivid contrast between when humans rule and when God rules. There is darkness, and there is light. There is night and there is day. There is an immensely flawed heart, and then there is the heart of God. There is leadership that is characterized by deception, paranoia, fear, murder most foul, really, that is capable of any kind of, or any depth of, evil,.. and then there is the leadership that can be trusted, that never deceives or misleads, that is blindingly pure, and right, and good, and unselfish! The contrast could not be greater!



God wants us to remind us of what we already know deep down. When we banish Him from our lives we **ALWAYS** make a mess of things – little messes, or one **BIG** mess! We seem to work hard at grabbing for pleasure, prestige, possessions, position, and along the way we are walking all over our foundational relationships – parents, spouses, children, friends, colleagues. Unwittingly we are wrecking all of life’s potential for love, joy, peace, for freedom, justice, unity, goodness, and true beauty! It’s why married partners end up despising each other! It’s why children end up despising or resenting their parents! It’s why colleagues often can’t stand each other. There are

We need Jesus! We need to be reconciled to our Creator/God before we can be truly reconciled to each other. It is why Jesus came! He came to bring peace. The angels, heaven's messengers declared the Christ Child's purpose - "***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men***"!

