



The King Is Preserved

Matthew 2:13–23



LESSON GOAL

Students will see God’s sovereignty, protection, and providence in directing and preserving the Son of God and fulfilling Scripture.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God protected Jesus from Herod.
- Herod tried to kill Jesus.
- Joseph obeyed God without delay.
- Jesus was raised in Nazareth.

KEY VERSE

“But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel!’” (Matthew 2:19–20a).

APPLICATION

- Trust that God is all-powerful and will take care of you.
- See whether selfishness is in your heart.
- Praise God for sending Jesus to pay for sin.
- Obey God’s Word and your authorities.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Dreams and Angels (Matt. 1:20; 2:12–13, 19, 22)

For hundreds of years there had been no new revelation from God. But with the birth of Christ came a sudden flurry of revelation and supernatural events. Messages from angels through dreams were uncommon in both the Old and New testaments, but Matthew records five supernatural visits in the brief time surrounding Christ’s birth. Luke records additional angelic visitations in these days: Gabriel to Zacharias (Luke 1:11–19), Gabriel to Mary (1:26–38), and the host to the shepherds (2:9–15). The spiritual darkness and silence was broken, and the light and revelation going forth shows that this was a birth of unprecedented significance. God in human flesh was here, being heralded and announced as King!

Another pattern emerging from Matthew’s account is the unhesitating obedience and submission of everyone who received divine guidance (with the exception of Zacharias, who doubted). When God revealed a message to them, they obeyed immediately, whether they fully understood or not. To disobey, delay, or question would have been disastrous. This is an important lesson for both children and adults. God requires that believers submissively follow His Word and the earthly authorities He has ordained.

Why Egypt? (Matt. 2:13–15)

During the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great had established a sanctuary for Jews in Alexandria, an Egyptian city he had named after himself. Jews in the area had translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, and this translation was known as the Septuagint (or LXX). It was used by the Greek-speaking early church and was the translation used for many Old Testament quotes by New Testament writers.

Egypt was at least 75–100 miles from Bethlehem—far enough from Herod’s wicked reach. Of course, God could have sent Joseph, Mary, and Jesus elsewhere, or He could have protected Jesus in some other way. But the journey is in keeping with Matthew’s purpose to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish Scriptures. From the genealogy to the Sermon on the Mount (chapter 5), Matthew builds almost every paragraph around a text from the Old Testament and shows how it applies to Christ, and 2:15 is yet another example.

Hosea 11:1, in its original context, was a reference to the nation of Israel. Hosea tells of the prophet’s relationship to his unfaithful wife, Gomer, and is a picture of God’s love to unfaithful and undeserving Israel, particularly in bringing them out of Egypt. Moses used this imagery of Israel as God’s son when he told Pharaoh: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go, that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed, I will kill your son, your firstborn’” (Ex. 4:22–23). Like Moses, Jesus escaped the fate of other male

Additional Reference Materials

God in a Manger by John MacArthur

Matthew: MacArthur New Testament Commentary

babies who were to be killed (Ex. 1:22–2:10). Jesus' return from Egypt might have evoked Jewish readers' memories of the original Exodus under Moses. Some Jews were expecting the coming of a prophet "like Moses" (Deut. 18:15, 18). The subsequent command by the angel to travel from Egypt to the Promised Land, Israel (Matt. 2:19–20), may similarly have been reminiscent of the Pentateuch days.

Hosea 11:1 was referring to the past rather than the future. The passage was "fulfilled" by Christ in the sense that the historical exodus of the Jews pictured the Messiah coming out of Egypt as their representative and deliverer. Technically, this might be best called a pictorial prophecy or a type (nonverbal prediction), in which the inspired New Testament writers interpret an Old Testament person or event as illustrating a truth about Christ not explicitly described in the original text. Of course, the rich symbolism of the original Passover escape (Ex. 12) also looks forward to Christ, our Passover lamb, who lived among the people and whose blood covering was the only way believers can escape judgment.

Herod Tries to Kill Jesus

In Herod's mind, there could be only one "king of the Jews"—himself—and any competitor must be killed. Infuriated by the perceived deception by the wise men (who were simply obeying the angel), he unleashed his fury through infanticide. Satan himself wanted to kill Christ (Matt. 4:5–6; Rev. 12:1–5), and Herod's rage was devilish. Population estimates indicate there were perhaps 15 or 20 children less than two years old in Bethlehem at that time. This devastating mass murder was not recorded by contemporary historians (including Josephus), probably because murder to protect the throne was such a common practice. History records that Herod had killed a young high priest, relatives, and friends. He had a favorite wife strangled and even killed some of his own children! Emperor Augustus reportedly joked it would be better to be Herod's pig (Greek huos) than his son (Greek huos), for a pig had a better chance of surviving in a Jewish community.

Herod's massacre was even more heinous because he knew that the child he sought to destroy was the Messiah. Herod questioned the chief priests and scribes specifically about "where the Christ was to be born" (Matt. 2:4) and arrogantly set himself up against God's Anointed. The chief priests and the scribes, along with the many other Jews in Jerusalem who must have heard or known about the magi's message, were not innocent simply because their hands did not cause the bloodshed. They showed no interest in finding this child, much less in worshipping Him, and these leaders eventually would want to kill Jesus themselves.

Matthew 2:17–18 shows that even Herod's evil atrocity was used by God to fulfill (literally "fill up" or complete) Jeremiah 31:15. Like Hosea, Jeremiah's original passage was historical rather than an explicit Messianic prediction, but the New Testament interprets it as a type of Christ. Rachel was the wife of Israel (also known as Jacob; Gen. 30–37) and the mother of sons whose tribes would form the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel. "Rachel weeping for her children" in Jeremiah's day represented the lamentation of all Jewish mothers who wept over Israel's great tragedy in the days of its captivity. More than this, they typified and prefigured the mothers of Bethlehem weeping bitterly over the massacre of their children. Men's desire to kill rather than worship Christ would later cause even the King of the Jews Himself to weep over Jerusalem because of His people's rejection of Him, which would bring judgment (Luke 19:41–44).

It should not be overlooked that Jeremiah 31, quoted here by Matthew, is not all negative. For many Jews who knew their Scriptures, it would bring to mind the familiar promises of hope after mourning (Jer. 31:16–17), mercy (31:20),

repentance (31:21–22), the new covenant (31:31–34), and God’s promised future for Israel (31:35–37).

Jesus Returns to Nazareth

History tells us Herod died in the spring of 4 B.C., which is why scholars place Christ’s birth at least a year or two earlier. Herod’s son Archelaus ruled over Judea and was known for his cruelty. He executed two popular rabbis whom he saw as troublemakers and once sent his army into a rowdy Passover crowd, where about 3,000 Jewish pilgrims were killed when things got out of hand. He was so bad that Augustus himself feared a revolution from the people and eventually deposed Archelaus and banished him from the area in A.D. 6. This explains Joseph’s fear and redirection to Nazareth in Galilee (55 miles north), but, again, the ultimate reason Matthew gives has to do with fulfillment of a divine plan.

No Old Testament text directly matches Matthew’s quote “He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matt. 2:23). But ancient authors sometimes blended texts, and since both Jews and Greeks played on words to make a point, some suggest this text could be a play on the Hebrew word *netser*, “branch,” a title for the Messiah (Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; cf. Isa. 11:1; 53:2). Others suggest that by changing the letters slightly, it could refer to the Nazirites, a class of people dedicated to God (cf. Num. 6:1–21). These views have problems, however, and it may be best to understand this simply as a known saying of the prophets not recorded in the Old Testament. Jude 14–15 similarly quotes a prophecy from Enoch not in the Old Testament, and the New Testament gives sayings of Jesus that were not recorded in the Gospels (Acts 20:35, for example). However one understands the reference, one fact is clear: Nazareth was a lowly, reproachful place in which to grow up (John 1:46), and the insulting name “Nazarene” and other reproaches on Christ fulfilled many prophecies that the Messiah would be “despised and forsaken of men” (Isa. 53:3; 49:7; Psalm 22:6–8; 69:20–21). It was in this lowly and despised place that the royal Son of God would live humbly for most of His earthly life.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth” (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Why did Matthew write his Gospel?

Matthew wrote to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Who appeared to Joseph in a dream?

An angel of the Lord.

Did Joseph obey God and take Mary as his wife?

Yes.

What was unique about Jesus' birth?

Jesus was born of Mary, so He was fully man, but God was His father, so He was fully God.

What was special about Jesus' name?

The name Jesus means "the Lord saves."



Walk As Fast As You Can

Have the students stand on one side of the room, or behind a line outside. Demonstrate the difference between a fast walk and a run. Then have the students with a particular characteristic—those with long hair, or wearing the color red, for example—walk as fast as they can to the other side of the room or to a finish line. Then have the students with some other characteristic go. Continue until all the students have gone. Repeat if time allows. Ask the students, "Who can walk fast. Do long legs help?" Tell the students that in today's lesson, Joseph and Mary take Jesus to Egypt. They leave at night and walk as fast as they can.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

In today's lesson, we are going to learn how God protected baby Jesus from a wicked man. The man's name was Herod, and he ruled over all the people in and around Jerusalem. We learned before that Herod was very jealous when he heard from the wise men that Jesus, the King of the Jews, had been born. Herod thought Jesus would try to take away his power and become the ruler. This made him very angry and jealous. Earlier Herod had tried to trick the magi into telling him where the baby Jesus was so that he could find Jesus and kill Him. But the wise men never returned from their trip. They had been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod. They obeyed because they knew the warning was from God.

When Herod realized that the wise men were not coming back, he was furious. He gave an order to his soldiers to kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years of age and younger. He wanted to make sure that Jesus would die and not become the King. But God knows everything, and He knew what Herod was up to. He already had made sure that Jesus was safe from Herod because it was not God's timing for Jesus to die. God had already sent an angel to Joseph. The angel said to Joseph, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him" (Matt. 2:13). Do you think that Joseph obeyed? Yes. He took Jesus and Mary and left at once. They went to Egypt, where they would be safe from Herod. Joseph obeyed because he knew that the angel was giving him a message from God, and he wanted to obey.

Back in Bethlehem, King Herod had killed all the male children in the village and the surrounding region. It was very sad. The mothers cried and cried for their babies. But God used this for good, because it fulfilled a prophecy. A prophecy is when someone tells what is going to happen a long time before it actually happens. It had been prophesied a long time ago that the Jewish mothers would be crying and very sad because their children had died. This was a way for God to show that He knows everything. He knows about things that have not happened yet. It also showed that Jesus was God's Son, the Messiah.

After Herod eventually died, an angel again appeared to Joseph while he was in Egypt. The angel told him that it was safe to go back to Israel because Herod was dead. Joseph obeyed and took Jesus and Mary, and they left Egypt to go to Israel. This was like when Moses took the Israelites and left Egypt to go to the Promised Land. The land of Israel was in the Promised Land. Joseph and Mary needed to find a new home and a safe place to live. They decided to settle down in a city called Nazareth, and that is where Jesus grew up.



Lesson Questions

Who wanted to kill Jesus?

King Herod.

What order did Herod give?

Herod ordered that all the male children two years old and under in Bethlehem and the surrounding region should be killed.

How did Joseph know to flee to Egypt?

An angel of God warned him in a dream.

Did Joseph obey God?

Yes.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.

Praise and Worship

God Is So Good

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

Joy to the World!

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

Trust and Obey



Flight to Egypt

Herod wanted Jesus dead.

(Hold hands at head to indicate crown; pretend to rock baby.)

Joseph and his family fled,
(Run in place.)

Went to Egypt as God said,
(Form pyramid shape with hands.)

Escaped the enemy.
(Wipe brow in relief.)

We can read and understand
(Hold hands like book; point to temple.)

This was all God's perfect plan,
(Point upward.)

Saving Christ from Herod's hand,
(Pretend to snatch something and hold it close.)

Fulfilling prophecy.
(Hold hands like book; nod head.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Dreams and Angels

Discuss the angel's visits to Joseph and all the revelation and supernatural events surrounding Jesus' birth. Explain that for 400 years before Jesus was born, men heard nothing from God. Also discuss angels in today's world. Explain the importance of checking all things against the Bible, the Word of God, to know whether they are true.



"Trip to Egypt"

Materials: copies of the "Trip to Egypt" craft page, glue, crayons, other decorations
Directions: To help the students understand the geography of where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus traveled when fleeing Herod, have them decorate this map of Israel and Egypt. Younger students can trace the path that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus took. The students could glue small paper pyramids, a manger, and a house on the spots where they were located in the story.



Egypt Craft

Materials: copies of the pyramid patterns (at back of lesson), scissors, blank sheets of paper, strips of paper with Matthew 2:13b printed on them, crayons
Directions: Give the students each a blank page and a page of pyramid patterns. Instruct them to cut the pyramids out along the solid lines and then fold along the dotted lines. Then they can color their pyramids. On their blank sheets of paper,

they should place the pyramids and color other things Mary, Joseph, and Jesus may have encountered on their trip. Tape the verse strip at the bottom of the page.



Follow the Leader

Play the game "Follow the Leader." Discuss with the students what it means to be a leader and guide. Ask them what makes a good leader and what makes a bad leader. God was Joseph's perfect Leader and Guide.

Coloring Pages

Give each student copies of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.

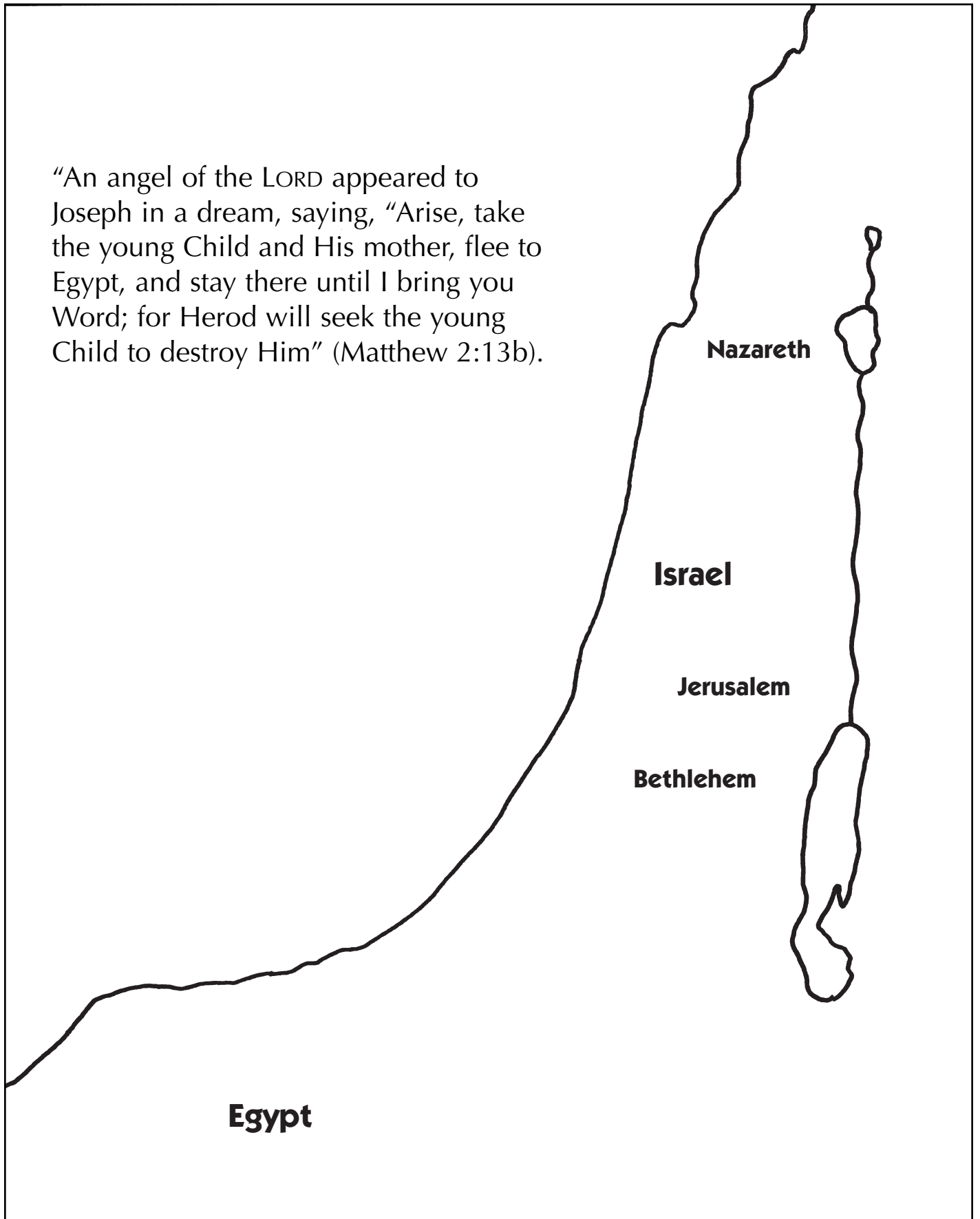


MEMORY VERSE

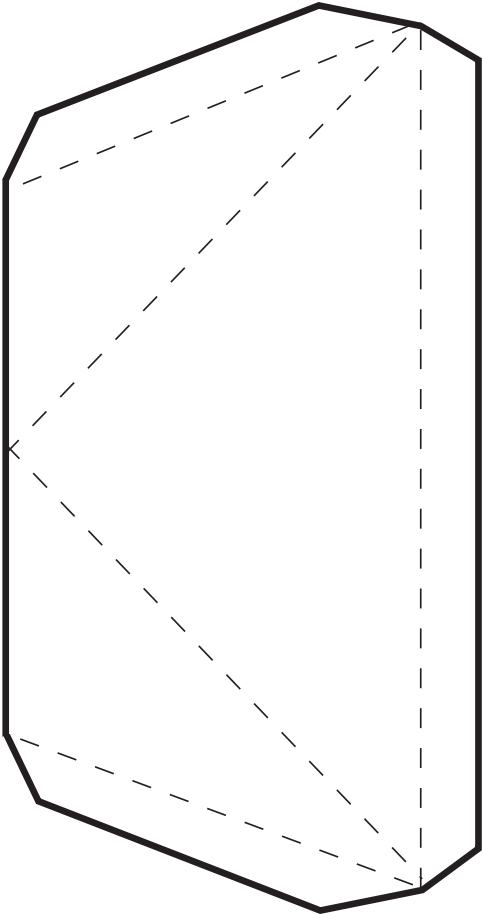
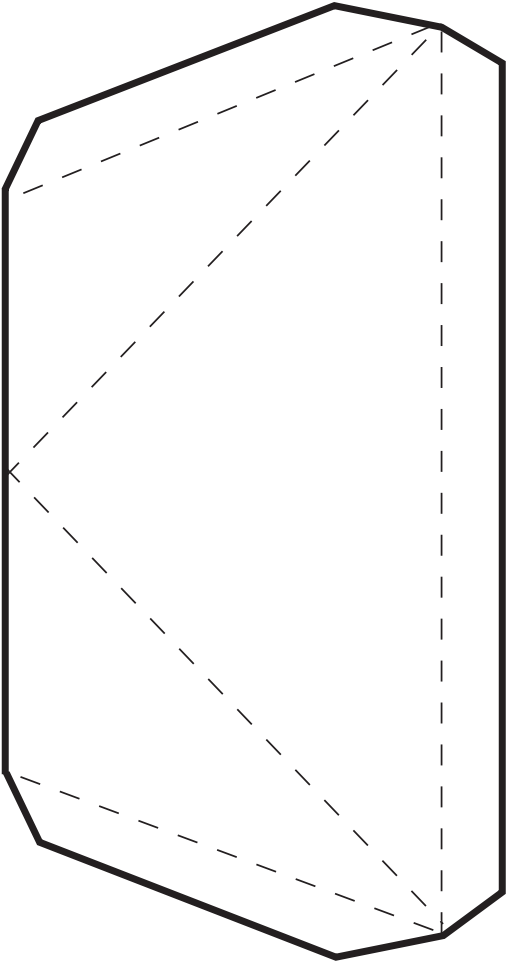
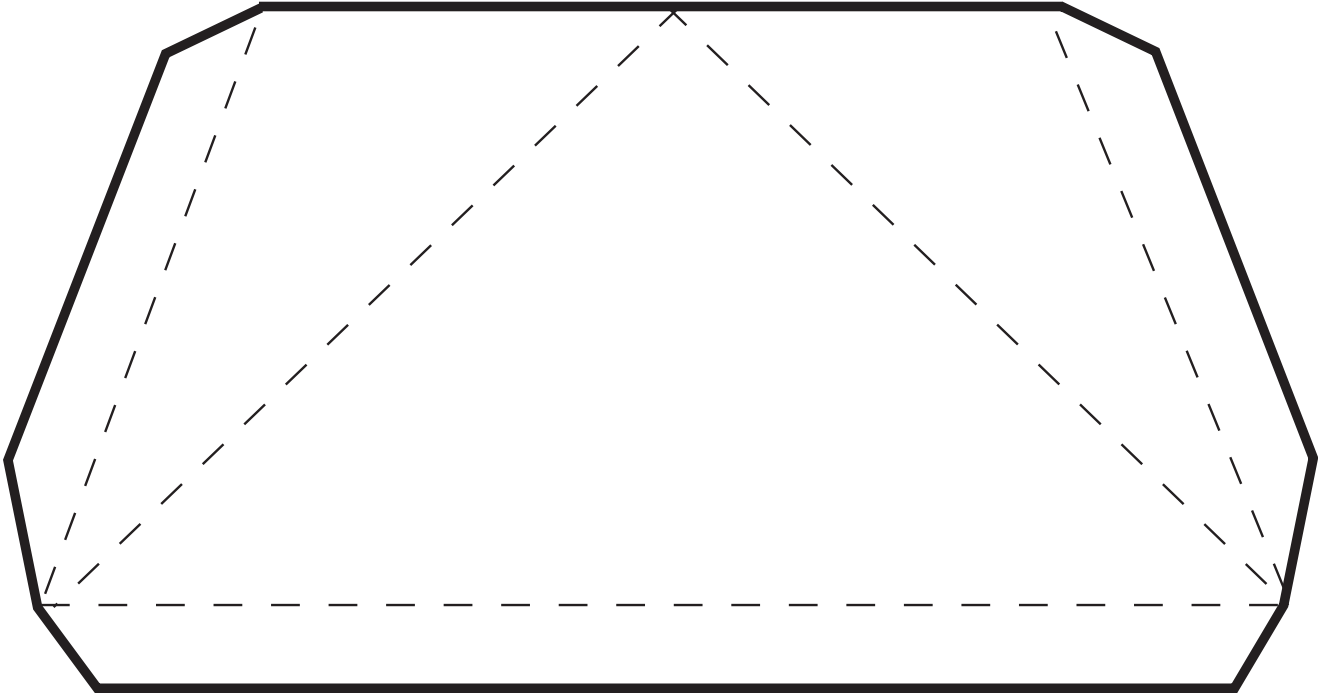
"Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel'" (Matthew 2:19–20a).

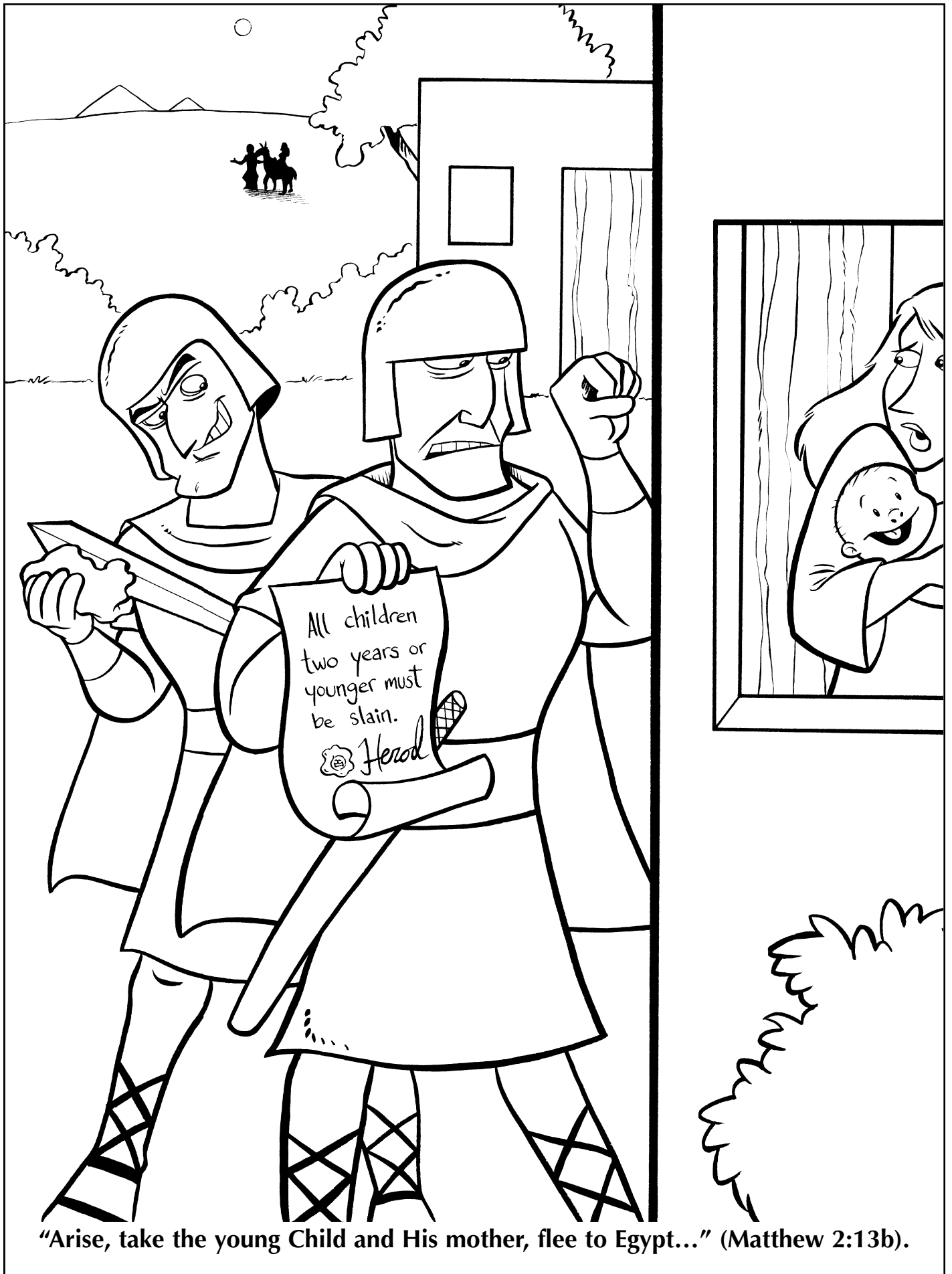
Flight to Egypt

“An angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you Word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him” (Matthew 2:13b).



Pyramid Patterns





"Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt..." (Matthew 2:13b).



**“Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead’”
(Matthew 2:19–20).**

