

Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God's Presence (a study of Matthew).

Sermon Text: Matthew 2:13-23

(App to get lesson/slides, ask

questions. Color Pg)

Title: "Our King Relates to Our Seasons of Shadow"

I think most of us can relate to what I'll call "*shadow seasons*", a type of "*God, where are You*" season. While you watch others thrive in their relationship with God, you pray and pray until you stop. We ask again and again: "*God what? God why? God when?*" And so on and so on. Some shadow seasons resemble:

- Feelings of being insignificant
- Being in a humiliating place
- Years of singleness
- Waiting for healing

What I've learned over the years: There are some seasons where we can't seem to see God's hand and there are others where His powerful guiding hand is obvious. Seeing His handiwork often requires looking back after years of spiritual growth and maturity. As good as this can be, relying on it often makes our trust and our faith provisional. Is this why it's so hard to trust God's providences & protections during these shadow seasons? This is a vital question to ponder because we want every loose end wrapped up, we want every tragedy and every silence explained. My point is that sometimes the "*Now I see what God was doing*" moment never comes. God's faithfulness doesn't wait on our comprehension. Through Christ, the sufficiency of the 'Who' eclipses the mystery of the 'why.' That's exactly what's being taught in Matthew 2, even the Author of Grace isn't exempt from the ache of the unexplained as we watch our King and His family vanish into their own shadow season. God wouldn't launch the Gospel from a palace, instead Matthew wants us to see that even when the Baby King was in the shadows, God's hidden providence was actively

protecting His promises and fulfilling His purposes. The same is true for us and that's our...

BIG IDEA: We have a sufficient Savior for shadowy seasons.

Today we'll discover 3 ways Matthew proves this. The question for us is: "Do we trust God for provision and protection because we see the ending or do we trust God because we know the Character of the Author?" Matthew shows God providing for and protecting His Son who carries the weight of His redemptive plan through extraordinary means that reveal God as Shield of Sovereignty. So, that's where we'll begin. *Verses 13-14* prove that **God is our Shield of Sovereignty**. Matthew structures our passage around divine dreams (vv. 13, 19, 22). We know at that moment, Joseph didn't have a map or an itinerary; he only had a dream and a command. Matthew Henry noted that "*While God typically works through ordinary providence, natural laws and human agency, here He uses His Sovereignty.*" (defined) Biblically, sovereignty is God's absolute right and power to govern His creation according to His own will. While the word "sovereign" is often used as a title for a king, in the Bible it describes the "God-ness of God" - His total, independent authority over every atom and every moment of history. Ironically here, God uses His sovereignty over **Preservation, Human Partnership and Government** by sending them to the previous house of bondage in Egypt where it becomes a house of safety. R.C. Sproul often pointed out the historical irony in God's providence and protection that Egypt was the sanctuary for God's covenant king while the king over God's covenant nation sought to end His life. In this light we should consider Joseph's vulnerability: he's a poor carpenter, lacking political power, resources, and foreknowledge being pursued by Herod, a furious strategic tyrant backed by the full mechanism of the Roman Empire. This is a massive unfair difference. Such a disadvantage would provoke me to want way more information

than a simple message in a dream to: “*Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.*”

While the disparities between the two are immense, Scripture reveals a deeper reality: God maintains immediate access to human spirits. Herod controlled all of Judea, but God held the ear of the dreamer, proving that the safety of the child Messiah didn't rest in Joseph's strength, but in God's absolute proximity to the soul of His servant. Imagine a pilot flying a small, single-engine plane into a massive, blinding storm. On his own, he is helpless, he can't see the mountains or other planes, but he has a headset. An Air Traffic Controller, sitting in a tower far above the clouds, sees everything for him on radar. Joseph didn't need to see the storm; he only needed to hear the Voice in his ear. Sovereignty, in this case, means that while Herod owns the "*weather*," God owns the "*radar*." Just like in our shadowy seasons, God didn't provide Joseph with an explanation of how the flight to Egypt fits into the grand tapestry of Hosea's prophecies. He simply provided the "next step."

Herman Ridderbos in his commentary on Matthew argues that the Kingdom of God on earth is the "*dynamic of God's royal rule*." His point is that the Kingdom is not merely heavenly or a static realm or even a place on earth, but an active, ongoing exercise of God's sovereign power on earth as in heaven. The angel speaking and Joseph moving was the perfect alignment of the earthly and the heavenly. Joseph's immediate obedience, rising up while it was still night (v. 14) reflected a heart that trusts the **Navigator** despite the "*blinding storm*" of turmoil and grievous lack of understanding all the surrounding circumstances. Joseph's obedience didn't create the protection; it simply *participated* in it. OUR focus should stay on the **proximity of the King and His** guidance, trusting Him for the unstoppable preservation of His Redemptive Plan.

Speaking of trusting Him, in doing so it's wise to define God's "*protection*" not as a guarantee of safety from earthly sorrow or even physical death. So, we'll have to grapple with Matthew 2:15-18. While Joseph and Jesus were "*shielded*," other families of Bethlehem were not. I'm referring to King Herod's brutal killing of the babies in Bethlehem. The tragedy acts as a grim foreshadowing of the Crucifixion, making the cruelty of the world and the sacrifice of Jesus clear to all ages. God allowed the "*shadow*" to fall on Bethlehem and eventually on His own Son at Calvary so that the ultimate shadow (eternal separation) would never fall on us. Sovereignty isn't a formula we crack to get out of trouble; it is a person we lean on while we're in trouble. The "*Shield*" is the Lord Himself (Psalm 3:3), regardless of whether we are fleeing to Egypt or facing a "*Herod*" we cannot escape. How do the patterns of your life affect your perspective of bringing heaven to earth?

Again, we're talking about 3 ways that Matthew proves our Savior is sufficient for shadowy seasons. His first proof in *verses 13-14* is that **God is our Shield of Sovereignty**. His second proof in *verses 15-18* is that **By faithfully reliving failed patterns of the past, Jesus IS the True Israel**. Matthew isn't just recording history he demonstrates this 2nd way in the unique manner of typologies.

- **The Dreamer Joseph:** Just as Joseph of Genesis was a dreamer who protected and provided for the covenant people in Egypt, Joseph of Nazareth guards the Covenant Savior. Both men lived the reality of Genesis 50:20, "What man intends for evil, God subverts for good." Typologies emphasize- these aren't just "*links*" to the past, they are proof that Jesus is the **correction** of the past. By "re-running" the Exodus story of Israel, Jesus succeeds exactly where the nation failed. He doesn't just relive the narrative; He redeems it by coming the Greater Moses and the Faithful Son

- **The New Moses:** Just as the infant Moses was hidden to escape Pharaoh's decree (Exodus 1:22), the infant Jesus is hidden to escape Herod. This mirrors the shadow season of bondage and the Exodus, identifying Jesus as the Mediator of a New Covenant, a Deliverer far greater than Moses.
- **The Faithful Son:** By retracing Israel's steps, into Egypt and back out again, Jesus fulfills the role of the "Son" perfectly. Where the old Israel faltered in the wilderness, this "*True Israel*" remains faithful in the shadows. By applying this to Jesus, Matthew identifies Christ as the True Israel, the entire nation in His own person.

To repeat, our trust isn't in our ability to understand the "why" of our own exile, but in the "Who" that has successfully navigated the path for us. G.K. Beale calls this "*recapitulation*." He says; "*Think of it through the lens of a Master Musician. For centuries, Israel was like a student attempting to play the 'Song of the Law,' but they consistently hit wrong notes and missed the rhythm. Jesus is the Master who sits down at the same piano and plays the exact same notes (the history of Israel) with perfect soul, timing and accuracy.*" For Matthew's Israel and our Fellowship, this typology is crucial to show that Jesus was not abolishing the Old Testament storyline, but fulfilling it, thereby validating his authority as the promised Messiah.

So, here's how this applies to us: Jesus assures not only Israel but also us that our hope is not found in our ability to do God's will perfectly. We, like old Israel, are prone to hit wrong notes. Our hope is in the fact that the True Son has re-run a perfect version of human history on our behalf. This is the gospel in miniature: Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died. Israel failed in the wilderness; Jesus succeeded. We fail to keep God's law; Jesus kept it perfectly. And now, by faith, His perfect record becomes ours. This is why we can

approach God with confidence, not because of our performance, but because of His. If this sounds familiar it's because we use this type of language every Sunday in our liturgy. We rest in this anchor of fulfillment.

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Have you ever felt like your life was "on hold" or stuck in a place you didn't choose? In Matthew 2, the young King Jesus is exactly in that spot. First as a refugee in Egypt, then living in a "nowhere" town called Nazareth. You'd think "*How in the world could anything in those shadowy places prepare Him for what's to come and His purposes as God's minister in them?*" In that context Matthew wants us to see something vital: Even when the King is in exile or living in obscurity, God's Word is an immovable anchor. Nothing in Jesus' life was an accident, and nothing in ours is either.

In conclusion, Hosea 11:1-2 (which was quoted in *verse 15*) says, "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away. They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols.*" Out of Egypt and for three decades, the world ignored a carpenter's shop in Nazareth. We often mistake God's silence for His absence, but Nazareth proves

that these "*shadow seasons*" may actually be the secret workshop for His preparing us for something or someone, even if that someone is YOU in relationship with Himself. And that my friends is why the ultimate answer to the "Shadow Season" is not a **Reason**, but a **Presence**.

In Matthew 1, He is called **Immanuel** (God with us). *In Matthew 2*, we see exactly what "**with us**" looks like: it looks like fleeing in the night, living in obscurity, and navigating a world where tyrants sometimes seem to win and His Presence provides us with a **Hopeful Faith**:

1. **The Shield of Sovereignty in the Cross:** At the Cross, the "Shadow Season" looked like a total failure. It looked like the "Light of the World" had been extinguished by Jerusalem's darkness.
2. **The Redemption of the Shadow Season:** But in the greatest irony of history, the moment that looked like God's absence was the moment of His most powerful work.

And remember, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you need not work through anything alone. Reach out and let us help!

Sunday to Monday Connection: Most of us know what it's like to walk through hard seasons—times when God feels quiet, prayers feel unanswered, and life doesn't seem to make much sense. You're doing your best to trust God, but you're still asking, "Lord, where are You in all this?" Today's message teaches us God's faithfulness doesn't depend on us understanding what He's doing. Our trust isn't built on having all the answers—it's built on knowing the One who walks with us.

- **Question:** As we head into this week, when things don't make sense, will you choose to trust God for who He is—even if you don't understand what He's doing?
- **Next Step:** Dare to ask Jesus to reveal Himself as the God who is always with us. He delights in doing that. See questions in the lesson above and the takeaways below.

- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

Quotes related to this passage:

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016)