

First Sunday after Christmas

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 63:7-14

The LORD's Mercy Remembered

7 I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 8 For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.” And he became their Savior. 9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 10 But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them. 11 Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, 12 who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, 13 who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble. 14 Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.

63:7–64:12† A prayer of Isaiah, asking the Lord to bring about the redemption he has promised. It is similar to a national lament (see, e.g., Ps 44). (CSB)

Looking at the contents of 63:7-64:11 Delitzsch says rather aptly that it is “a prayer of thanksgiving, penitence, and petition.” Looking more at the outward form, Westerman calls it “a community lament.” It has much of the flavor of Ps. 77, 78, 105, 135, and 136. Some things are reminiscent of Deut. 32. First the whole of history of the people of God is reviewed (7-10), then the history of patriarchal times (vv 11-14. Verses 7-10 carries echoes of 1:2-3. (Leupold)

Isaiah corrects two misconceptions his hearers are prone to harbor about the way God leads to glory. It is a fatal mistake to think we can “go limping between two different opinions” (1 Kings 18:2). It is just as wrong to doubt God’s willingness to take sinners back when they repent and plead for mercy. (TLSB)

63:7–14 A recounting of the Lord’s work in the exodus from Egypt. (TLSB)

63:7–9 The prophet intercedes with a psalm that praises the Lord for “the great goodness to the house of Israel” (v 7; cf Ps 89; 111; 145–50). (TLSB)

63:7 *goodness*. A demonstration of God’s unflinching love as he stood true to his covenant with Israel. (CSB)

The shift from Yahweh’s wrath, vengeance, and anger (63:1–6) to his covenant love is striking. But when we come face-to-face with the Warrior God who tramples people in wrath so that their blood spatters his garments (63:3), the only sane response is to recall his Gospel promises. And so the first section of Isaiah’s prayer is a historical recital (63:7–14), which is a recollection of divine kindnesses in the face of the apostates’ rebellion (e.g., 56:9–12; 57:3–13a). (CC)

Though it may seem strange to begin a bitter lament by remembering Yahweh’s ancient salvific deeds, the Gospel acts of yesteryear are intended to stand in stark contrast with the current state of despair. In this way, the lament commences (63:7–9) much like Psalm 106, which also unfolds in the same manner as Isaiah’s prayer. (CC)

In recalling God's deeds of mercy the writer's heart grows warm and his tongue eloquent; thoughts gush forth. For certainly Israel's history was a catalogue of merciful dealings on God's part. (Luther)

The beginning of v. 7 is translated literally by KJV: "I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord." Clearly, we would say "deed of loving-kindness" ("steadfast love" here fails to catch the intimacy of the expression). In recalling God's deeds of mercy the writer's heart grows warm and his tongue eloquent; thoughts gush forth. For certainly Israel's history was a catalogue of merciful dealings on God's part. Seldom has the pen of man captured this truth more fittingly. Especially the deep taproot of his dealing is detected: goodness, mercy and loving-kindness. (Leupold)

great goodness. Cf. Jos 21:45; 1Ki 8:66. (CSB)

compassion. There is a difference between compassion and mercy. רַחֲמִים, "mercy," we call benefits. חַסְדִּים, "compassion," is the fatherly feeling of not wanting to take revenge but of sparing. The prophet uses these two words here to show how gracious God is to us. (Luther)

63:8 *my people, sons who will not be false.* But see 1:2–4. (CSB)

Israel. *children.* They disappointed the Lord. Showered with favors, they nevertheless rebelled against Him (v 10; 1:2). (TLSB)

The movement from 63:7 to 63:8–10 is a change in focus from *speech* about Yahweh's grace to Yahweh's gracious *actions*. In 63:8–10 Isaiah recounts God's blessings to Israel much like an exasperated father reminds a wayward child (Is 1:3–6; Hos 11:1–4). In doing so he affirms that this God is the Trinity: he is our *Father* (63:8; see also 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]); the Son (see the commentary on "the Messenger of his presence" in 63:9); and the "Holy Spirit" (63:10). To quote Delitzsch: "Hence Jehovah, and the angel of His face, and the Spirit of His holiness are distinguished as three persons." Yet these three persons are not three gods, but the three persons of the one and only God (Deut 6:4; "an eye has not seen a god except you," Is 64:4). (CC)

All the blessings God's prophet promised were still in the future. In Isaiah's day, the reality of life in Jerusalem was anything but a glorious, joyful, or triumphant existence. Sin still dogged their lives. Green, envy, pride, ambition, and rage still clogged all their relationships. Drunkenness and sexual immorality brought temporary pleasure but then returned to bite with the fangs of guilt and misery as these sinful pleasures only wasted lives and potential. Death remained the victor over every human effort. In the world of history and politics, the Assyrian army may have retreated during Isaiah's day, but eventually a new threat would appear. The Babylonians would come and destroy everything. All these realities sound so contemporary. (PBC)

This verse seems to clash with reality. For Israel was most stubborn and continually going counter to the revealed will of the Lord. None knew that better than the Lord himself. Surely, the Lord was not blindly deceiving himself. Again we have a striking instance of anthropomorphic speech. Love might induce a man to put the better construction on all that the nation does. Strict reasoning is not going to fathom the depth of divine love. This verse surely says with emphasis that the Lord's favors toward the nation were utterly underserved. The last statement of the verse may be a reference to what God did in Egypt and wilderness. (Leupold)

Savior. See 43:3 and note (Who delivers from the oppression of Egypt or Babylon and from the spiritual oppression of sin.). (CSB)

During the exodus. Cf Ex 14:13; 15:2. (TLSB)

At the exodus, Israel was designated Yahweh's firstborn son (Ex 4:22; Is 1:2–4; Hos 11:1; cf. Gal 4:4–7), and he became their Father (e.g., Is 45:11; 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10). To be outside this relationship is to suffer divine judgment (e.g., Deut 32:19). Only God's "sons/children" who call him "Father" are saved from divine wrath (Rom 8:15–16; Gal 4:6; cf. Phil 2:15; 1 Jn 3:1, 10). (CC)

63:9 *In all their affliction...afflicted.* The suffering in Egypt and during the period of the judges is probably in view (see Jdg 10:16). (CSB)

God is not a heartless tyrant. When He disciplines, He feels pain in His own heart (cf. Hen. 4:15). (TLSB)

In the exodus event Israel was designated as God's people (Ex 6:7), and this led to a "honeymoon" with Yahweh. Jer 2:2–3; Ezek 16:7–14; and Hos 2:16 (ET 2:14) express similar thoughts. Israel had "anguish" (Is 63:9) at this time, but most of it was not from Yahweh. It came from Edomites (e.g., Num 20:14–21) and Amorites (Num 21:21–26). (CC)

But Israel's enemies are Yahweh's enemies (cf. Gen 12:3). When Israel suffers, Yahweh suffers. He is not detached from the pain of his people. Whoever strikes Israel strikes the apple of Yahweh's eye (cf. Zech 2:12 [ET 2:8]). This same line of thinking continues into the NT where Jesus tells his disciples, "He who rejects you reject me" (Lk 10:16), while he asks Paul, who was ravaging the church, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?" (Acts 9:4). (CC)

Hence we dare not dismiss the statement "in all their anguish he had anguish" (Is 63:9) as merely anthropomorphic or anthropopathic. Such a move discounts God's suffering with and for his people. In Hos 11:8 he cries out, "My heart is turned within me; together my compassions grow warm." Yahweh is not an unmoved mover, but the God whose heart is warm with tender love and mercy. Following this OT trajectory, Jesus takes divine suffering to the ultimate limit on Good Friday when he, God Incarnate, bleeds and dies for the sins of the world.(CC)

There is something touching about the manner in which the Lord identified himself with his people's sufferings. This is divine empathy at its best. (Leupold)

Every child of God treasures this verse. We can apply it first to the history of God's dealing with His OT people. The Lord was touched by their affliction in Egypt. Moses wrote: "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (Exodus 2:23-25). He brought them out of Egypt and carried them through the wilderness and all throughout their history. While these thoughts fit the situation of an OT believer, they apply as well to every believer of any generation at any time. We are comforted in knowing that the Lord shares our distress and pain. He is not distant, detached, or remote from any of His people. In all our afflictions, God Himself is afflicted. There's more. He has redeemed us by the blood of His own Son and delivered us from sin, death and hell. But there is still more. As we trace the steps we have walked through life, we can also say that the Lord has lifted us up and carried us all along the way. Our prayers flow from the deep faith in what the grace and mercy of God has already done for us. (PBC)

angel of his presence. See Ex 23:20–23; 33:14–15. (CSB)

A long-standing Christian interpretation is that when God appears tangibly in the guise of his Messenger/Angel in the OT, this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.⁴⁶ “The Messenger of his presence” (Is 63:9) first appears in Gen 16:7. After Hagar’s brief conversation with this Messenger, Moses abruptly writes: “So she called the name of Yahweh who was speaking to her, ‘You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Have I really seen after the one seeing me?’” (Gen 16:13). Thus to see the Messenger is to see God (Gen 16:13; Ex 3:2–4; cf. Judg 6:22). In Gen 22:11–14 Yahweh’s Messenger commands Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac, for there will be a substitute offering (cf. Rom 8:32). Then the Messenger calls to Abraham a second time and says, “I swear by myself, the utterance of Yahweh” (Gen 22:15–16). He also appears to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:2). Yahweh promises to send this Messenger before Israel to lead his people into the promised land, and they are to obey the Messenger’s voice, for, says Yahweh, “My name is in his midst” (Ex 23:20–21). He is one with Yahweh (e.g., Judg 6:11–23; Zech 12:8; cf. Jn 10:30), for he is revered and worshiped as God (Ex 3:6; Judg 6:24; 13:3–22). (CC)

If all this sounds complex, it is! God does not fit into simplistic categories or facile theological systems. He is sovereign over all, while also demonstrating solidarity with his people through his Messenger, the preincarnate Christ. (CC)

Though Yahweh’s Messenger and Yahweh himself might seem to be distinguishable, through the former we meet the latter (cf. 1 Chr 21:15–16; 2 Chr 3:1). Paul asserts that God’s glory is made known “in the face of Christ” (ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, 2 Cor 4:6), who is the “image” (εἰκὼν) of the invisible God (Col 1:15), for “in him all the fullness of the Deity dwells *bodily*” (σωματικῶς, Col 2:9; cf. Col 1:19). (CC)

God’s empathy led him to delegate a notable messenger of his to appear on the scene again and again, “the angel of his presence,” about whom the generation of the Exodus seems to have had an understanding which went farther than our speculations can reach. God appears to have manifested his presence through this uncreated angel in a kind of incarnation before the Great Incarnation. He was the nation’s best gift from God. His mere presence was a deliverance (Exodus 33:15). (Leupold)

The angel who is in His presence must preserve him, as Matt. 18:10 says that the angels who are in the presence of God see us. So does Ps. 91:11: “He will give His angels charge of you.” (Luther)

redeemed. See 41:14; 43:1 and notes (Deliverer from Babylonian exile (in a new exodus). The Hebrew for this word refers to an obligated family protector and thus portrays the Lord as the Family Protector of Israel.). (CSB)

Where the prophet might have dwelled on the Lord’s obligation toward the people whom he has chosen for his own, he goes deeper into the warm and affectionate heart of God and ascribes all “to his love and pity.” (Leupold)

lifted ... carried. Like a father (see Dt 1:31; 32:10–12). (CSB)

Is 63:9 concludes with the endearing description “he took them up and carried them.” Yahweh did this, like a father carrying his child (Deut 1:31; Hos 11:3), and it brought him great pain and distress (Amos 2:13). Shouldering Israel refers especially to the exodus when, for example, Yahweh says, “I bore you on eagles’ wings, and I brought you to myself” (Ex 19:4; cf. Deut 32:11–12; more generally, Is 40:29–31). In his Suffering Servant Jesus, God climactically bears not only the burden of Israel, but also the sin of the whole world (1 Jn 2:2). Jesus was laden with our sins (Is 53:4–6) when he bore them in his body on the cross (1 Pet 2:24) so that all might be declared righteous by grace and through faith alone (Is 53:10; 54:17; 60:21; 61:10; 2 Cor 5:19–21). (CC)

That is, forever, as stated in Deuteronomy: Remember that the Lord your God carried you as an eagle carries its young (cf. Deut. 32:11). The expression is also in the Book of the Acts (cf. Acts 9:15). (Luther)

He concludes this approach by likening God to a compassionate father who “took them up” when they fell down and “carried them” till they forgot their hurt. Here we find ourselves almost at the point of the NT approach of “our Father.” The prophet, and the nation speaking after him, ascribe this attitude not merely to a few exceptional cases but to “all the days of old.” What a delightful way of recalling the past! (Leupold)

63:10 *rebelled.*† In the desert and later. (CSB)

The Israelites rebelled despite the Spirit among their leaders (Nu 11:17–30; cf Ps 51:11). (TLSB)

This verse interrupts the historical overview of Gospel gifts as the harmonious picture is rudely broken by the confession of Israel’s rebellion. The stark disconnect is highlighted by the first word in the verse *הֲמָּוֹתָי*, “*but they ...*” Covenant grace was not met with covenant loyalty. Israel’s conduct was incongruent with God’s saving mercy. This verse, along with passages such as Deuteronomy 32; Psalm 106; and Nehemiah 9, maintains that Israel’s relationship with Yahweh can be summarized in two words: stubborn unbelief. The nation’s greatest enemy was not Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. Israel defeated itself through its own persistent idolatry. (CC)

So many divine kindnesses were not grasped by the Israelites’ fickle faith. They shunned Yahweh’s goodness and rebelled against his ways (e.g., Exodus 32; Numbers 11; Deuteronomy 1–2). Psalm 106 reviews Israel’s response to grace. The people sinned, forgot, rebelled, craved wickedness, became jealous, worshiped other gods, despised the promised land, murmured, provoked Yahweh to anger, mixed in with the nations, sacrificed their children, and played the harlot. No wonder Ezekiel frequently calls Israel “a house of rebellion” (*בְּיַת מְרִי*). (CC)

Any review of Yahweh’s mercy (63:7–9) is not honest without acknowledging human sin. Is 63:10, then, is central to the lament in 63:7–14. It serves to connect Yahweh’s Messenger (63:9) with his Holy Spirit (63:10–11). The three verse passage (63:9–11) is framed by the expression “the days of old” (63:9, 11). (CC)

Normally in these kinds of litanies Yahweh’s spokesmen level the accusation that Israel has despised the Sinaitic covenant (e.g., 2 Ki 17:15). Instead Isaiah employs language of a more personal nature. “They grieved his Holy Spirit” (Is 63:10; cf. Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power, force, concept, or idea. *He is a person*. He is inseparable from Yahweh, as is Yahweh’s Messenger (Is 63:9). The three persons of the Trinity are the one true God. All three, then, appear in 63:9–10. (CC)

The familial nature of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel continues in the prophet’s lament with the term “Father” (Is 63:16; 64:7 [ET 64:8]). The close ties binding the Father to his children compound his divine suffering. Within the book of Isaiah, the initial oracle sets this stage for Yahweh’s pathos. “Sons I raised and reared, *but they* [םָּוֹתָי, just like *הֲמָּוֹתָי* in Is 63:10] rebelled against me” (Is 1:2). Heschel writes: “The speech that opens the book of Isaiah, and which sets the tone for all the utterances by this prophet, deals ... with the sorrow of God. The prophet pleads with us to understand the plight of a father whom his children have abandoned.” The tone in 1:2 is not of a military general who has a difficult time handling acts of insubordination or of a professor who is frustrated with an unresponsive student. Rather, it is that of a long-suffering father who is in great anguish over what his children have done. Yahweh’s parental pathos is shown most vividly in Hos 11:1–9. (CC)

As confident as we may be of the Lord's grace, we are just as sure that our sins have grieved Him. The human spirit is perverse. When it notes all the blessings that flow from the grace of God, it rebels against God. Illustrations of that basic persistent flaw can be found on the pages of Israelite history as they wandered through the wilderness. They complained about the bread that God miraculously gave them. At the foot of Mount Sinai, they made and worshiped a golden calf. The human spirit has not improved over the centuries. Sin still throttles our joy and turns us away from God to ourselves. We claim to achieve and succeed by our own power. We want to bask in the glow of our own achievement and imagine that they are good enough to deserve God's notice and reward. Yet our behavior reveals the depth of sin and stranglehold it has on our hearts and minds. (PBC)

How faithful are we in simple things like worship, prayer life, reading and studying His Word? How many times do we go days on end without thinking about our Lord? Does the Savior also say of us, "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 15:8). And then suddenly, a bit of trouble comes into our lives, and we remember. Back to church we go. We remember how to pray. We ask His forgiveness and promise to do better, if only He'll get us out of trouble this one more time. And the Lord hears and does! How many times? Only you can answer that! But is it not also a sad truth that once the trouble or problem has been taken care of, all too often we slip right back into our former ways, and the cycle is repeated over and over again. (LifeLight)

grieved his Holy Spirit. See Ps 106:33; cf. Isa 11:1–2; 42:1. (CSB)

Though he is the Holy One of Israel and is absolutely transcendent, God is not so far above the fray that he is unmoved by human sin and suffering. On the contrary, he chooses to become engaged in the mess of this world, so much so that, even if he must suffer for it—as he does in Christ—he will not pull back (Is 50:5–6). It is therefore wrong to conceive of God as emotionless or unfeeling. This is a human assumption, based upon what we perceive as God's indifference to our plight, coupled with Greek thought. It is a mistake to think that God only responds to sin with rational reflection and critical analysis. His people "grieved his Holy Spirit" (63:10). (CC)

Yet many interpreters continue to propose that Yahweh is utterly remote and aloof. They use the label "anthropomorphism" as their vehicle to marginalize texts that depict his pathos. For instance, Rowley calls texts like 63:10 "mere accommodations to human speech, or vivid pictures used for their psychological effect rather than theological in significance." God is anything but detached. Rather, he is torn apart by human pain and burns with a loving desire to be in a relationship with all people. No wonder biblical writers employ images of husbands and wives, parents and children, so as to describe God's pain, loss, and grief. In one case Yahweh laments, "Because of the shattering of my daughter people, I am shattered; I mourn, and horror has seized me" (Jer 8:21). He cries out, "Would that my head would be waters and my eye a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain ones of my daughter people" (Jer 8:23 [ET 9:1]). While some believe that Jeremiah is the speaker here, elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah it is Yahweh who most often employs the terms "my people" (e.g., Jer 8:7, 11; 9:6 [ET 9:7]; 15:7; 23:22) and "my daughter people" (e.g., Jer 8:19, 21; 8:23 [ET 9:1]). He is anything but a stoic power, unmoved by tragedy and hardship. (CC)

The relationship between the OT and the NT in this regard is not simply a contrast between prophecy and fulfillment, shadow and substance. There is also continuity. The God who suffers in the OT all the more suffers in the NT in the person of his Son, Jesus, the Christ. Moreover, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and into the ages [forever]" (Heb 13:8). Therefore the sufferings of Christ, which historically took place in the NT era during his earthly ministry, cannot be dismissed as irrelevant for the depiction of God in the OT era; indeed, the OT prophets foresaw his sufferings and subsequent glories (e.g., Is 52:13–53:12; see 1 Pet 1:11). (CC)

And this has enormous ramifications for how we live. If we think of God as utterly remote and disconnected from human pain and agony, then we will fashion ourselves in like manner. Such people are defined by self-reliance and aloofness, while they make their goal in life the avoidance of all commitments that bring with them pain and suffering. The Bible objects to this conception of God and people; Christ calls us to suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him (e.g., Acts 9:16; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29; Rev 2:10). This is the baptismal life (Rom 6:3–11). (CC)

To this stubborn rebellion the divine reaction was that he “was grieved.” Divine love was wounded. The Holy Spirit enters into the unexpectedly. He does not often appear in the OT. He is more than a potency; more than an attribute. For he can be grieved, which is a purely personal reaction. His reaction was more than a mood of temporary displeasure. (Leupold)

Grief is an emotion of God. It is when God is sorry, as in Gen. 6:7, “I am sorry that I have made them.” If He treats them well, He will spoil them; if He smites them, it is not right either. Such an emotion is attributed to God, not as though He was thus moved, but the holy prophets, Moses, and Noah conceived of Him in this way. (Luther)

Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

The Holy Spirit is grieved not only when people choose to deny Jesus Christ but also when Christians choose to disregard or disobey the Spirit’s counsel in the Word. Most of us can recall a time from our childhood or teenage years when we did something very wrong. With the memory of the offense comes the recollection of our parents’ faces as we looked at them without guilt. They were grieved, terribly disappointed in us. One does not forget that look. Paul describes the Holy Spirit as grieved by our sin. (Ephesians LifeLight)

fought against them. Jerusalem suffered destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (2Ki 25:8–9) because of idolatry. (CSB)

When Israel rebels something of extreme value and importance has been despised and rejected, causing a powerful and stern reaction: “he turned to be their enemy; he even fought against them.” This is a strong reaction. When he fought against them that was apparently done through the world powers: God gave Israel over into the hands of nations greater and mightier than themselves and let them be subjugated. It is an evil thing to have God go on record as hostile to a nation, Egypt and Assyria being their lords. All this is recorded against a background of sincere repentance. (Leupold)

Hebrews 10:31, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

63:11 *then he remembered* – When we stray, God calls us to return to the loving arms that have guided us, redeemed us, and delivered us. (PBC)

The exodus is esp remembered as the time God shepherded His people through the ministry of Moses. (TLSB)

Is 63:10 is a disruptive condemnatory bump in the Gospel road. Now the lament picks up where it left off in 63:9, with the recital of Yahweh’s great acts of salvation. In doing so, 63:11 presents several questions. First, who is the subject of the first verb, “he remembered”? Is it Yahweh or Israel? Earlier Isaiah recalled Yahweh’s covenant kindnesses (63:7). But here, Yahweh, the subject in the preceding two lines of 63:10, likely remains the subject. Yahweh does not just remember vague generalities, but rather specific

historical events involving “Moses” and “his [Yahweh’s] people.” When the Israelites were in Egyptian bondage, Yahweh “remembered” his covenant with their patriarchs (Ex 2:24), and this led to Israel’s exodus deliverance (“bringing them up from the sea,” Is 63:11). The implication of Isaiah’s recital of that saving act is this: since Yahweh “remembered” then, why doesn’t he do it again now and initiate a new act of salvation for the prophet and his contemporaries? (CC)

Affliction set Israel thinking time and again. In the good sense of word they remembered “the good old times.” This was wholesome because it was done penitently. The Mosaic Age in particular seems to be rich in comfort and instruction. (Leupold)

sea. The Red Sea. (CSB)

The second question prompted by 63:11 is this. When did Yahweh place his Holy Spirit in Israel’s midst? During the wilderness generation, the Spirit dwelled within Bezalel (Ex 31:2–5) as well as Moses and the elders (Num 11:16–17, 25). Yet the immediate context is about the Red Sea (“sea,” Is 63:11; “waters,” 63:12; “depths,” 63:13). Therefore Isaiah may be alluding to Yahweh’s visible presence in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud leading up to the crossing (Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–24) and then afterward (Ex 33:9–10; Ex 40:36–38). The prophet also may have in mind Yahweh’s promise to dwell in the midst of Israel (Ex 29:43–46), which took place visibly when the consecrated tabernacle was filled with Yahweh’s glory (Ex 40:34–35). (CC)

shepherd. Moses. (CSB)

The exodus is especially remembered as the time God shepherded His people through the ministry of Moses. (TLSB)

Holy Spirit. The Spirit rested on Moses and 70 elders (Nu 11:17, 25). See also v. 14. (CSB)

Yet another option is made possible by the multivalence of the noun רוּחַ, which can mean “spirit” (as here in Is 63:11) or “wind” or even “breath.” During the Egyptian plagues Yahweh brought and then removed the locusts by means of a “wind” (רוּחַ, Ex 10:13, 19). The miracle of parting the waters was also accomplished by Yahweh by means of a “wind” (רוּחַ, Ex 14:21). When רוּחַ, *ruach*, recurs twice in the Song of the Sea (Ex 15:8, 10), it might again simply mean “wind,” but the phraseology in those verses connects it to Yahweh personally: “by the *ruach* of your nose” (Ex 15:8); “you blew with your *ruach*” (Ex 15:10). Especially in Ex 15:10, the association of this *ruach* with the “sea” and the “waters” may recall “the Spirit of God” hovering over the face of the deep in Gen 1:2. Could this be the way in which Yahweh set the Holy Spirit in the midst of Israel? Could this be what St. Paul means when he uses the sacramental language of Holy Baptism: “all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:2)? (CC)

63:12 right hand. See 51:9 and note (Symbol of God’s power.); Ex 15:16. (CSB)

Besides the fire and the cloud, the Lord accompanied Moses and the people with His powerful arm. (TLSB)

The figure employed is unusual but clear. As Moses, the shepherd, strode along, there was, visible to the eye of those who believed in the Lord, the “glorious arm (51:9; 52:10; 62:8) (going) at the right hand of Moses.” (Leupold)

divided the waters. See Ex 14:21; cf. 11:15; 51:10. (CSB)

Isaiah's description of Yahweh's salvific acts continues with more participles. He hopes that the participles, which normally accent current action in progress, will awaken Yahweh to act now. In 63:11 the prophet employs participles to write about "the one bringing them up" (הַמַּעֲלֶה) with "the shepherds of his flock" (רֹעֵי צֹאֲנוֹ) and "the one setting in his midst his Holy Spirit" (הַשֵּׁם בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת־רוּחַ קֹדְשׁוֹ). Now he adds to the list "the one causing ... to go" (מוֹלֵךְ) and "the one dividing" (בּוֹקֵעַ). "Moses" is also repeated from 63:11, while "his [Yahweh's] beautiful arm" is added. Yahweh did all of this not because Israel deserved it, but to make for himself "an everlasting name" (63:12; cf. 55:13). Will he show forth the power of his name again? (CC)

It might said that God's omnipotent power at every point sustained and upheld Moses, enabling him to do the impossible, like dividing the waters (Ex. 14-16) before the nation and removing an insuperable barrier to their escape. (Leupold)

everlasting name. Similar to God's fame in the exodus. (CSB)

This act enhanced the "name," i.e., the renown and reputation of the Lord (cf. 55:13; 56:5; 64:2) with an undying luster. (Leupold)

63:13 depths. Of the Red Sea (see Ex 15:5, 8; Ps 106:9). But the crossing of the Jordan may be intended as well. (CSB)

Isaiah's penchant for participles continues with "the one causing them to walk [מוֹלֵךְ] through the depths," another reference to the Red Sea miracle. Then Israel's exodus through the waters is compared to a horse smoothly and effortlessly walking in the wilderness. Contrast this perambulatory ease with Isaiah's description of those in the community who "stumble in midday as if [in] the twilight" (59:10). (CC)

A level plain, encumbered by no obstacle, makes the passage of the cattle swift and safe. – Bible story books try to illustrate this event, but pictures cannot do justice to the greatness of this miracle. Imagine two million people (2 cities the size of Indianapolis) with all their livestock and baggage p[assign through a large sea in a time interval of one night! The space of dry land on which they walked must have been at least one-half mile wide; if not more. (PBC – Exodus 14)

not stumble – An insuperable obstacle becomes not even the least bit of an obstacle. (Leupold)

In rescuing his people from the clutches of Pharaoh and bringing them to Canaan, Yahweh employed plagues to judge the Egyptian gods (Ex 12:12). By his Spirit-wind and water he drowned Egypt's crack military units (Ex 15:8, 10; see the commentary on "Spirit" in Is 63:11). He provided manna and quail (Exodus 16), brought water out of a rock twice (Ex 17:1–6; Num 20:1–13), and even turned Balaam's curses into blessings (Numbers 22–24; see Neh 13:2). Nothing can obstruct Yahweh's plans for his people (cf. Rom 8:38–39). So why doesn't he enact them now? (CC)

63:14 go down into valley. To find pasture and water. (CSB)

Destination of the shepherd, the imagery used in v 11. Cf Jsh 1:13; Ps 23:1–2. (TLSB)

Isaiah continues to employ animal imagery. Does the analogy between Israelites and cattle going down into a valley continue the motif of the Red Sea crossing? Or does this refer to the conquest of the land, the place where "Yahweh's Spirit gave him [Israel] rest" (63:14)? Since the gift of rest is often connected with Joshua's victories over enemies in the land (e.g., Josh 1:13; 22:4), it seems more likely that the

prophet is comparing Israel's conquest of the land to cattle that have been led to quiet places of respite (cf. Ps 23:2). (CC)

Cattle having grazed on a hillside drift down easily into the valley, where water may be found and thirst slaked. (Leupold)

gave rest. They found a home in Canaan, the promised land (see Dt 12:9; Jos 1:13; 21:44). (CSB)

Like a shepherd, Yahweh guided his flock into the valley of green pastures and abundant waters. There Israel found peace (Deut 3:20; 11:9; 25:19; Josh 21:44; 23:1; Ps 95:11). He led his people "in all these ways, with all that power, out of all that love, in spite of all that offence." These great deeds bring beauty or glory to Yahweh's name. In a greater way Jesus gives us rest (Mt 11:28), which one day will be absolutely perfect (Hebrews 3-4). (CC)

The chief point at issue is that time and again, where there might have been distress and trouble, God's Spirit "gave them rest." Many are the instances where God thus helped His people in what might have been grievous trouble. (Leupold)

63:7-14 The Lord's steadfast love for His people is beautifully epitomized in the exodus from Egypt. Just as surely as Israel rebelled against the Lord and grieved His Holy Spirit, we have done the same by our sins of thought, word, and deed. His steadfast love is given for us in Jesus Christ. He was afflicted for our sins. Through the gift of His Holy Spirit in the waters of Holy Baptism, the Lord is pleased to lead us as His people. • "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps 51:10-11). Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Galatians 4:4-7

Sons and Heirs

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

4:4-5 *But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that he might redeem those under the Law and in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.* The roughly chiasmic structure of the verses serves to contrast God's Son/sons with those under the Law in need of redemption:

- A God sent forth his Son
- B Born under the Law
- B' To redeem those under the Law
- A' That we might receive the adoption as sons (CC)

Paul does not develop the phrase "born of a woman" (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός) elsewhere in the letter, and "the fullness of time" (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου) is unique in the Pauline corpus. Some scholars have therefore contended that these two phrases, the chiasmic pattern of the verse, and the first person usage ("we") are evidence that Paul is adapting a Jewish-Christian "sending" formula. These scholars hypothesize that Paul draws on the "sending" formula also in Rom 8:3-4: God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to resolve the requirement of the Law. Like Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:3-4 speaks of God's sending, of Christ's sharing human existence, and of the plight under the Law. The two passages,

however, differ considerably in wording. The hypothesis that pre-Pauline material stands behind either Gal 4:4–5 or Rom 8:3–4 is questionable. The phrases “the fullness of time” and “born of a woman” need not reflect pre-Pauline Jewish Christianity. Paul admonishes the Galatians at the beginning of the letter to recognize that they are in the midst of a new age inaugurated by Christ’s saving work (1:4), thus “the fullness of time.” “Born of a woman” is a common expression in Greek literature for sharing in humanity. Paul is stressing at this point Jesus’ identification with the human condition. (CC)

In developing their hypotheses of a Jewish-Christian “sending” formula, some commentators have speculated that the first Christians were connecting Jesus with the figure of Wisdom. Perhaps standing behind Gal 4:4 is Wis Sol 9:10: “Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her” (NRSV). Perhaps standing behind Gal 4:6 is Wis Sol 9:17: “Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?” (NRSV).⁵⁸ Another scholar abandoned any reference to pre-Pauline Jewish-Christian traditions and attributed the language of “sending” to Paul himself as he identified the Son seen on the Damascus road with the figure of Wisdom. These suggestions are unlikely as well. Wisdom of Solomon 9 does not identify Wisdom with the “Son of God,” and the sending of Wisdom is a response to Solomon’s need for guidance and not to the plight of the people as a whole. The sending of Wisdom may parallel the sending of the Son *or* the Spirit but hardly the twofold sending of both the Son *and* the Spirit in Gal 4:4–6. Still another scholar linked a potential “sending” formula not with Wisdom but rather with the Gospel traditions. In Mk 12:1–12, especially Mk 12:6–7, the father “sent” his son to check on the vineyard tenants even as God “sent” his own Son in Gal 4:4. As these varied hypotheses demonstrate, the notion that Paul is citing traditional material in 4:4–5 is unlikely and incapable of proof. Whether traditional or not, these verses express Paul’s own thinking. (CC)

The debate over pre-Pauline traditions behind 4:4–5 raises yet another question: the referent of the first person pronouns and verbs. Is Paul distinguishing “we” Jewish Christians by his first person pronouns and verbs in 4:3, 5 from “you” gentile Christians in 4:6? Paul never actually says that the “we” group in 4:3, 5 consists of Jewish Christians, and 4:5–6 is even more problematic for the proposal. In 4:5b “we” receive adoption as sons, and yet 4:6a concludes on the basis of that very adoption of the “we” group: “Now because *you* are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into *our* hearts.” *The “you” and “we” groups must be the same, or Paul’s line of reasoning would collapse.* One ardent advocate of the distinction between “we” Jewish Christians and “you” gentile Galatians has therefore resorted to the desperate measure of emending the Greek text of 4:6 from “our hearts” to “your hearts” in order to match “you are sons” in 4:6. This proposed textual emendation is based on meager external evidence. The first person “our hearts” is the more difficult reading and therefore more likely the original reading, since scribes would have wanted to eliminate the possibly jarring contrast between the first person and second person pronouns and verbs (“we” in 4:5; “you” and then “our” in 4:6). Certainly God did not send his Son in 4:5 in order that “we” Jews might receive the “adoption as sons.” That is a privilege that Paul grants Israel *before* Christ’s coming (see Rom 9:4)! The logic of Gal 4:6–7 makes little or no sense if the pronouns and verbs are referring to differing groups: “And because you [gentiles] are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into *our* hearts [as Jewish Christians] ... so that you [gentiles] are no longer a slave but a son.” Jewish Christians do not depend for their reception of the Spirit on the gentiles’ adoption as sons. Paul is describing in 4:4–7 the situation of believers in general, regardless of whether they are Jewish or gentile. The Son’s work of redemption in 4:4–5a leads to the reception of sonship in 4:5b, which, in turn, leads to the reception of the Spirit by the same group (4:6): Since *you* are sons, God sent forth the Spirit into *our* hearts. (CC)

Paul begins 4:4 with “but when the fullness of time came” (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου). The apostle does not say anything here about conditions in the Roman Empire. He does not say anything about a common government, a single language of commerce, a network of roads, or protected sea lanes. Paul’s categories here, as elsewhere in the letter, remain apocalyptic. Galatians opens with reference to

“the present evil age” (1:4) and closes with the dawning of a “new creation” (6:15). The Scriptures frequently refer to God’s appointed purpose being brought to fruition at the appointed time (Dan 8:19 [cf. Dan 11:35]; 1QpHab VII.2; Mk 1:15; 13:32; Lk 21:24; Acts 1:7; 3:21; Eph 1:10). The rival teachers have completely missed *what time it is!* Substantives in Greek that end in -μα, as does πλήρωμα, “fullness,” tend to stress completed action. God has a plan for this world, and that plan is now coming to completion with the sending of the Son! The coming of the Son with his powerful Spirit has inaugurated a new age in the history of humanity with the full benefits of sonship. Paul, along with *all* Christ’s own (!), lives at a climactic moment. Two thousand years of intervening history do not change the comforting fact that believers enjoy God’s historic, completed work. (CC)

The reference to God’s “Son” in 4:4 comes amidst a cluster of terms centered on family and inheritance. Thanks to the rivals’ influence, the Galatians are coveting a sonship that would relate them to Abraham, the father of God’s historic people (3:6). Paul speaks of something even better. He grants that they have indeed become sons of Abraham, even if not in the manner that they had supposed. They are sons of Abraham not through Moses’ Law but rather through Christ, the sole, legitimate Seed of Abraham and the rightful recipient of the Abrahamic promises (3:16–18, 29). Christ is not only the sole, proper heir of the Abrahamic promises, but he is also the sole, proper “Son” of God (1:16). Since believers are “in Christ” (3:28) and God has sent Christ’s Spirit “into” them (4:6), they become *fellow* heirs. The Galatians are striving for Abrahamic sonship when they have already become sons of God with an incredible new identity (3:26)! (CC)

In the fullness of time, “God sent forth his Son, *born of a woman*” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός). Perhaps the sending of the Son is no different than God’s “sending” of human prophets and implies nothing with respect to Christ’s preexistence (Judg 6:8; Jer 7:25; Ezek 2:3; Hag 1:12; Paul in Acts 22:21). Indeed, Paul narrates his own call/sending with the language of the prophets (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Is 49:1, 5; Jer 1:5). The phrase “born of a woman” is a common way of expressing human existence in the OT, Second Temple Judaism, and even early Christianity (Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; Mt 11:11 || Lk 7:28; 1QS XI.21; Sirach 10:18; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.1.4 § 21; 16.11.5 § 382). Paul is probably not, then, referring in 4:4 to a virgin birth. The Son simply became thoroughly, fully human. The late-first-and second-century Docetists who denied Christ’s humanity would have done well to reconsider 4:4–5. (CC)

The question still remains whether Paul is implying the birth of a preexistent, divine being. In support of this conclusion, first, if “born of a woman” were only emphasizing Jesus’ humanity, then the phrase would have been unnecessary in the Galatian context since none of the parties would have disputed Jesus’ humanity. Paul does not elaborate on Jesus’ genuine humanity elsewhere in the letter. The phrase would be extraneous were it not signaling Jesus’ preexistence. Second, even as God sent forth the Spirit in 4:6, God sent forth the Son in 4:4. Even as the Spirit is preexistent, so also the Son is preexistent. Third, although Paul was sent by God in a manner comparable with the sending of the prophets (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Jn 17:18), he is not God’s Son. Unlike the prophets or apostles, the Son comes for a purpose that is cosmic in scope: he delivers people from “the present evil age” (1:4). Jesus’ mission to “the present evil age” suggests that he stands *beyond* this age and has invaded it from without in order to rescue and redeem humanity. Fourth, the order of Paul’s verbs in 4:4 (“sent ... born ... born”) has the Son’s sending *before* his birth, thereby implying his preexistence. Fifth and finally, Paul elsewhere in his letters expresses a very high view of Christ as God (Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6 [cf. Phil 2:5–11: a preexistent person!]; Col 2:9). The apostle also describes Christ in the language of preexistent Wisdom in 1 Cor 1:24, 30; 8:6b; 10:4; cf. Col 1:15–17. Precisely because the Son is a powerful, preexistent, otherworldly figure, he can deliver those who are under the potent, enslaving Law. (CC)

In Gal 4:4–5 God sent forth his Son under the Law “in order that he might redeem those under the Law.” Apart from 3:13 and 4:5, the verb “redeem” (ἐξαγοράζω) is used elsewhere in the Pauline corpus only in

Eph 5:16 and Col 4:5 in the difficult phrase “redeeming the time.” The only use of “redeem” in a sense similar to Gal 4:5 is in Diodorus Siculus 15.7: Some philosophers reportedly came together and redeemed Plato (ἐξηγόρασαν τοῦτον) to freedom after his sale on the slave market. Paul treats existence “under the Law” (Gal 4:5) as a form of slavery comparable to being “under the elements of the world” (4:3). The metaphor of slavery in this context probably suggested to Paul the verb “to redeem.” A Jew such as the historian Josephus could write: “[God] made the Law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master” (*Ag. Ap.* 2.17 § 174; Thackeray, LCL).⁸² Paul does not view such subjection so favorably. Earlier in 3:10–12 Paul explains that God’s Law demands obedience, and human beings fail to obey God’s Law in the perfect manner that befits the God who gave it. The Law inevitably brings a curse upon its adherents. In 3:13 Paul turns to God’s solution for humanity’s plight under the Law in Christ’s redemption. The apostle rejects as burdensome, oppressive, and impossible the futile attempt to avoid the curse through a proper obedience. One must die to the Law in Christ (2:19). Christ had to be “under the Law” (4:4) in order to redeem those “under the Law” (4:5). Luther’s advice with respect to justification still stands: “Law, I shall not listen to you, because you have an evil voice. Besides, the time has now fully come. Therefore I am free. I shall no longer endure your domination” (AE 26:365). God in Christ has delivered humanity from the Law’s burdensome, Egypt-like “yoke of slavery” (5:1; cf. Lev 26:13; Is 10:24–27). The mark of maturity for a Jewish teacher, Mosaic Law observance (e.g., Rom 2:20), has become ironically a mark of immaturity! (CC)

In Gal 4:4–5 Paul says that God has sent forth his Son not only to redeem those under the Law but also “in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.” In 3:26 Paul climactically declares the Galatians to be “sons of God in Christ,” and in 4:6 he again emphatically proclaims them God’s adopted “sons.” In the Greco-Roman world, adoption could grant even a slave the full rights and privileges of a natural son (thus 4:7). Although the Jews did not generally practice adoption in Paul’s day (υιοθεσία, Gal 4:5; cf. also Rom 9:4), the apostle is drawing on a widely recognized custom as a way of explaining the benefits of Christ’s saving work. (CC)

Paul associates “adoption as sons” (υιοθεσία) with the “Spirit.” In Rom 8:15, for instance, he refers to “the Spirit of adoption (as sons).” The parallels between Gal 4:5–7 and Rom 8:15–17 are striking:

Galatians 4:5–7

Romans 8:15–17

⁵... in order that he might redeem (from slavery)¹⁵You received not the spirit of slavery ... those under the Law

and in order that we might receive the adoption but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons, as sons.

⁶God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” hearts, who cries, “Abba, Father,”

because you are sons.

¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness ... that we are children of God,

⁷... and since a son, also an heir through God. ¹⁷and if children, then heirs of God.

Paul likewise connects “adoption as sons” (Gal 4:5) with the Spirit in Galatians as the logic of 4:6–7 spells out. (CC)

4:4 γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός (“born of a woman”)—In common speech there appears to have been some confusion between the verbs γενόμενον (from γίνομαι, “to become”) and γεννώμενον (from γεννάω, “to

beget"). On γίνομαι as the quasi-passive of γεννάω, see 1 Esdras 4:15–16; Tobit 8:6; Wis Sol 7:3; Sirach 44:9; Jn 8:58. (CC)

fullness of time had come. The time “set” (v. 2) by God for his children to become adult sons and heirs. (CSB)

Pictures a container steadily being filled with the passage of time until full. Corresponds to “date set by his father” in V. 2. Thus at a specific and appropriate time in human history, God acted to fulfill His eternal purpose. (TLSB)

"But when the time had fully come" simply means "the full time." "When God wills it." Leave it at that. (Buls)

At God’s perfect time, maturity came, brought by the Son of God Himself. Jesus was born as a Jew so He might be subject to all the ceremonial laws as well as the moral law, the Ten Commandments. Having kept them perfectly, and also suffering for us the penalty of sin (death), He “redeemed us – bought us back from the curse and power of the Law, so that we might have full adoption into the family with all the rights of sons. (LL)

Some think of this as when the Jews had finally reached a time in a certain maturity. This is not so because if Judaism was ever at a low spiritual ebb, it was so when the fullness of the time arrived. We can enumerate some of the providences which helped to open the way for the gospel such as the vast extent of the Roman Empire, the spread of the Greek language, the facility of travel throughout the empire, the extensive diaspora of the Jews, its many proselytes from Gentilism, etc. All of these aided the spread of the gospel. What God saw and regarded as the fullness of the time in the spiritual condition of men, barbarian as well as Greek, is too difficult for us to predicate because His thoughts and judgments are too unsearchable for us. (Lenski)

Romans 5:6, “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” 2 Peter 3:8,9, “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

Romans 11:33-36, “³³Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

God sent his Son. See Jn 1:14; 3:16; Ro 1:1–6; 1Jn 4:14. (CSB)

Then God “commissioned forth His Son.” This means that the Son went out on His commission not only “from” God but “out from” God. John says that He was with God (John 1:1) and was God and that He became flesh (John 1:14). (Lenski)

"Sent" means "to send out with a commission." (Buls)

"His Son" denotes the divinity of Jesus. He pre-existence is implied. (Buls)

born of a woman. Showing that Christ was truly human. (CSB)

The preexistent Son of God (1 Co 8:6; Php 2:6-11; Col 1:15-16) became fully human. Paul nowhere mentioned Mary by name; Jesus was the focus of his theology and devotion. (TLSB)

Does "born of a woman" denote the virgin birth? Luther and others say it does. (Buls)

It denotes more than the separation from the womb, it includes the entire human nature of the Son as this was derived from His human mother. (Lenski)

born under law. Subject to the Jewish law. (CSB)

Jesus was born a Jew and under obligation to keep the Law of Moses (see FC SD III 58). Consistent with Paul's imagery, Jesus entered our prison (3:23). (TLSB)

"Born under the Law" shows the humanity of Jesus. These words lead us right into the vicarious atonement. (Buls)

Luther: The Law did everything to Jesus that it did to us. It accused us and terrified us. It subjected us to sin, death, and the wrath of God; and it condemned us with its judgment It accused Him of blasphemy and sedition; it found Him guilty in the sight of God of all the sins of the entire world; finally it so saddened and frightened Him that He sweat blood, Luke 22:44; and eventually it sentenced Him to death, even death on a cross, Philippians 2:8. (Buls)

Space does not allow further beautiful quotes from Luther. It is time well spent for the reader to peruse his *Commentary on Galatians*. (Buls)

The Son "came to be under law" in general and not only under the pure code of Moses, but by virtue of this code under all that mankind had left of God's law as written in their hearts. (Lenski)

4:5 υιοθεσίαν ("adoption as sons")—Although daughters were sometimes adopted in the Greco-Roman world—and this may be reflected in Paul's movement from (masculine) "sons" to (neuter, inclusive) "children" in Rom 8:14, 16—daughters could not carry on a family line in first-century patriarchal society, and their adoptions are narrated with different terminology. Males were the only ones described by the ancients as enjoying "adoption as sons." Paul also prefers "sons" (υιοί, e.g., Gal 3:26; 4:6) over "children" (τέκνα, in Galatians only in 4:19–31) because the adoption of baptized believers as sons is dependent upon and inextricably tied to Jesus as God's "Son" (υιός, 4:4; also, e.g., 1:16; 2:20), the proper heir. (CC)

Here are two purpose phrases. Compare this with Galatians 3:14 where we also have two purpose phrases. In fact there is a close relationship between 3:10-14 and 4:1-7. Read the two side by side and note how the vicarious, universal atonement is so prominent in both passages. (Buls)

Compare the two clauses in 3:14 and 4:5. (Buls)

- a. In each case the *first clause* denotes what we call "objective justification."
- b. And in each case the *second clause* denotes what we call "subjective justification." (Buls)

REDEEM THOSE UNDER LAW – It is extremely important, therefore, to keep in view and always to consider this statement, so delightful and full of comfort, as well as others like it which define Christ properly and accurately; for then throughout our life, in every danger, in the confession of our faith in the presence of tyrants, and in the hour of death, we can declare with a sure and steady confidence: "Law, you have no jurisdiction over me; therefore you are accusing and condemning me in vain. For I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father sent into the world to redeem us miserable sinners who are oppressed by the tyranny of the Law. He poured out His life and spent it lavishly for me. When I feel your terrors and threats, O Law, I immerse my conscience in the wounds, the blood, the death, the resurrection, and the victory of Christ. Beyond Him I do not want to see or hear anything at all." (Luther)

The first pair of clauses: Why did Christ redeem us from the curse of the Law? "In order that Abraham's blessing (the Gospel) in Christ Jesus might come to the nations (3:14)." Why did God send His Son into the world? "In order that he might redeem those under the Law (the cursed, all men) 4:5." This is clearly objective justification. (Buls)

The Jews. (TLSB)

we – Both Jewish and Gentile believers (cf 3:14). (TLSB)

Galatians 3:13-14, "¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."

receive adoption as sons. Lit. "adoption [of a son]." See Ro 8:15, where the "Spirit of sonship" is contrasted with the "spirit of slavery" (cf. Eph 1:5). God takes into his family as fully recognized sons and heirs both Jews (those who had been under law) and Gentiles who believe in Christ. (CSB)

Now the second pair of clauses: In 3:14 it reads "In order that we might receive the promised Holy Spirit (the Gospel) by faith." In 4:5 we read: "In order that we might receive the adoption of sons." These purpose clauses are what we call subjective justification.(Buls)

In 3:10-14 Paul was discussing the awful danger of salvation by works. In 4:1-7 Paul is speaking about passing from the bondage under the Law to the freedom under the Gospel. (Buls)

Now, just one quote from Luther.

Luther: Now since Christ has conquered the Law in His own Person, it necessarily follows that He is God by nature. For except for God no one, neither a man nor an angel, is above the Law. But Christ is above the Law, because He has conquered and strangled it. Therefore He is the Son of God, and God by nature. If you grasp Christ as He is described by Paul here, you will neither go wrong nor be put to shame. Then you will be in a position to judge about all the various styles of life and about the religion and worship of the whole world. But if this true picture of Christ is removed or even obscured, there follows a sure confusion of everything; for the unspiritual person cannot judge about the Law of God Then what is the purpose of the Law if it does not justify? The final cause of the obedience of the Law by the righteous is not righteousness in the sight of God, which is received by faith alone, but the peace of the world, gratitude toward God, and a good example by which others are invited to believe the Gospel. (Buls)

"The sonship" is modified by the context (v. 1-3) and thus signifies the status of sons who have advanced from their minority to their majority, to the status of full-grown son who are no longer under guardians and stewards. "Adoption" is not the proper word, for it may apply to a babe, a minor son and heir. (Lanski)

Pass from the condition and spirit of servants to the privileges and filial spirit of sons, in a state not of minority and servitude, but of manhood and freedom. The only sure evidence is connected to our faith in Christ and a hearty reliance on Him for salvation. (CB)

4:6-7 *Now because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who cries, "Abba, Father." Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and since [you are] a son, [you are] also an heir through God.* The causal construal of the ὅτι, "because [ὅτι] you are sons," is the simplest and most natural approach to the syntax as Paul turns to the blessings of sonship, namely, the reception of the Spirit. Some commentators have advocated an alternative translation that reverses the logic: "That [ὅτι] you are sons is proved by [understanding ἐξαπέστειλεν to be an ellipsis for ἐμαρτύρησεν ἐξαποστείλας] God's sending the Spirit of his Son." Or: "It is clear [understanding δῆλον] that [ὅτι] you are sons, because [understanding another ὅτι] God sent forth ..." In Rom 8:14-15 Paul grounds the status of sonship in the prior presence of the Spirit. In other words, God creates sons by sending his Spirit.

Likewise in Gal 4:29, the Spirit gives birth to the children of God. The causal translation of ὅτι as “because” in 4:6, as advocated here, would seem to ground the experience of the Spirit in the prior sonship. That would appear to contradict the order in Rom 8:14–15, if not also Gal 4:29. Certainly Paul appeals to the Galatians’ prior reception of the Spirit in 3:1–5. Paul expresses the relationship between the Spirit and sonship *both* ways: in 4:6 the Spirit is granted to sons, and in 4:29 and in Rom 8:14–15 the Spirit creates sons. Precisely because the Spirit and sonship are experienced as coterminous, Paul may word the relationship differently depending on the context. The most natural understanding of the syntax in Gal 4:6 with the causal ὅτι (“because”) is preferable. The Galatians, as do all “in Christ,” enjoy the inheritance of sons: God’s powerful Spirit in their lives. (CC)

In 4:4 “God sent forth his Son” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ), and in 4:6 “God sent forth the Spirit of his Son” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). God’s sending of the Son and the Spirit is reminiscent of the sending of divine Wisdom in the Jewish Apocrypha (Wis Sol 9:10, 17). If the Wisdom parallels are any indication, Paul gives the distinct impression that the Son and the Spirit should be understood as divine. Furthermore, even as the Son is a personal being, so also must be the Spirit. Both are experienced simultaneously within the same, saving work of God. Gordon Fee has called 4:4–6 with its juxtaposition of God, the Son, and the Spirit “one of the great ‘Trinitarian’ passages in the New Testament.” (CC)

The sending of the Son and the Spirit together entails profoundly practical implications. Whereas the rivals are stressing the Law of Moses as the source of the Christian life, Paul is stressing the genuine change that “the Spirit of his Son” (4:6) brings. The Spirit has been poured “into our hearts” (4:6)! This is not some charismatic “second experience.” The experience of the Spirit is part and parcel of being a son, an heir, in Christ. The Spirit renders God and his Son a personal reality. The Christian enjoys a new, changed identity. Christ lives in the believer (2:20). The baptized believer is clothed in Christ (3:27). Those who enjoy the Spirit’s presence no longer stand at a distance from God but are privileged to address God as Father. The Spirit within the believer cries, “Abba, Father” (4:6) as did Jesus himself. The Spirit refashions those who are sons in Christ into the *likeness* of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29)! (CC)

“Abba” (ἄββᾶ) is a Greek transliteration of אבא, the Aramaic vocative for address of a “father,” even as the Greek ὁ πατήρ is likewise a vocative of address of the “Father.” The Aramaic word may initially seem out of place in a letter in Greek to a gentile audience.⁹⁸ Aramaic was the language of the Jews in the vicinity of their homeland, while Greek was the language of Paul’s gentile audiences. Paul’s doubled address of the Father in both Aramaic (ἄββᾶ for אבא) and Greek (ὁ πατήρ) is likely another way of expressing that Jews and gentiles in Christ now share the same rights as sons in the same family (thus also Rom 8:15). They are “no longer” slaves (cf. Gal 3:25). (CC)

The divinely enabled address of God as “Father” will be of comfort to those who have suffered under sinful earthly fathers. In his faithfulness to his promises and in his selfless love for his children, the heavenly Father is the model for all fathers. Those who have suffered enjoy a *new* family in Christ! The heavenly Father brought forth children for the purpose of a joyous personal relationship. The pain of broken homes, uncaring parents, and failed relationships all point to the need for a caring parent and, ultimately, for a sound relationship with the heavenly Father. The loving Father will heal the wounds, whatever they may be. (CC)

A venerable scholarly tradition has noted the fact that the Jews generally do not call God “Father” and has concluded that “Abba” must have been Jesus’ own unique, preferred form of address of God (thus Mk 14:36). That scholarly tradition has of late been scrutinized.¹⁰¹ First, the term “Abba” cannot be attributed with certainty to Jesus and may have originated in the Syrian Christian communities. Second, “Father” or “my Father” was occasionally used as an address and epithet for God in ancient Judaism (4Q372 Frag. 1.16; *T. Job* 33.3, 9; 40.2–3; 47.11; cf. *T. Job* 50.3; not as an address in *T. Job*).¹⁰³ Third, the address of

God as “Father” did not necessarily originate with Jesus. Even granting these reservations, God is rather frequently called “Father” (πατήρ) throughout the Gospels (forty-five times in Matthew, five times in Mark, seventeen times in Luke, and a hundred eighteen times in John). The frequent use of Father-language in the Gospels is striking when compared with the paucity of the appellation in Judaism. “If the title does not go back to Jesus, why should the writers of the gospels make such use of it?” “Father” as the preferred form of address for God conveys Jesus’ sense of a unique sonship. Mk 14:36’s lone attestation of Jesus’ calling God “Abba” should not be downplayed and should be considered alongside the multiply attested address of God as “Father.” Furthermore: “That he should invite his disciples to use his word after him was almost certainly an expression of grace on his part.”¹⁰⁷ Believers who have received “adoption as sons” (υιοθεσία, Gal 4:5) participate in the rights of sonship to such an extent that they may address God in the very words of his own Son (αββα ὁ πατήρ, “Abba, Father,” 4:6). (CC)

In many Christian circles, “Abba” is understood as an intimate form of address that is the equivalent of “Daddy.” This popular understanding is unfortunately mistaken. Jesus addresses God as “Abba” in prayer during a rather serious moment in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mk 14:36. Mark interprets Jesus’ Aramaic utterance with the ordinary Greek word for “Father” (ὁ πατήρ) and not “Daddy” (πάππας or πάππας). Paul, like Mark, juxtaposes the Greek equivalent “Father” (ὁ πατήρ) to interpret the Aramaic word. Grammatically, the Aramaic *-a* ending signified not intimacy but rather definiteness. By Jesus’ day, “Abba” had replaced older Hebrew and Aramaic forms as a solemn, responsible address of a father, whether on the lips of an adult or a child. The word may indeed be used with a sense of endearment, but the context would convey that sense and not the word itself. The head of a household was an authority figure who had the right to put a family member to death. Paul’s point in Gal 4:6 is not to express intimacy, but rather status. The presence of the Spirit of God’s Son who cries “Abba” demonstrates that those in Christ are likewise the sons of God. Paul’s comments may have been a response to the rivals’ claims about the identity of the true sons of Abraham. In Rom 8:15–17, on the other hand, in a context not dictated by a conflict situation, Paul describes those rescued from slavery and fear who by means of God’s own Spirit cry out, “Abba, Father.” The address of God as Father is close to the apostle’s heart. Again, Christians enjoy a special relationship with their adoptive Father. Those who call God “Father” in the Lord’s Prayer do so by virtue of a powerful, enabling presence in their lives! (CC)

Paul writes “into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). That the corporate community together cries out, “Father,” attests to the Spirit’s creation of a new family. The centrality of this new family in Paul’s letter is signaled already in 1:4 when Paul called God “*our* Father” twice (1:3–4). Christians are members of *a new household*. The apostle develops the mutual burden-bearing of that close-knit community in 6:1–10. The Galatians are threatening to abandon their Father *and* their family! (CC)

The modern world is obsessed with identity crises. People are constantly seeking to discover their inner selves for self-fulfillment and self-actualization, or they may find their self-worth in their work or achievements. This preoccupation with identity and with the self is an exercise in vanity. God graciously and freely grants the Spirit, who directs the Christian away from a preoccupation with self toward the praise of God as “Abba, Father.” A Christ-centered, God-honoring focus is at the heart of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Such a focus inevitably leads to the service of other people, especially those of the household of faith (6:10). (CC)

Paul summarizes 4:1–6 with 4:7: “therefore [ὥστε] ...” Paul’s usage of a second person verb emphasizes to the Galatians that they share in the privileges of a son. The trouble is that the Galatians are on the verge of losing all that they have gained in Christ. Slavery to the Law and sonship in Christ are mutually exclusive—precisely the opposite of what the rivals are claiming. Nothing more is required of the Galatians beyond what they were when Paul left them (thus 4:12–20). Paul appends “through God” at the end of 4:7 to remind the Galatians that God has already acted on their behalf. He sent forth his Son and his Spirit, and the Galatians now enjoy a privileged position as his heirs. The very notion that the masters

of all (4:1) would want to return to slavery reeks of absurdity, an absurdity to which Paul turns in 4:8–11. (CC)

4:6 δέ ἐστε (“now ... you are”)—The connective δέ signals a mild contrast with 4:5: the “adoption as sons” (4:5) is “now” a present reality for “you” Galatians.

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (“the Spirit of his Son”)—This is the more difficult and thus the more likely reading since “the Spirit of his Son” is an unusual phrase nowhere else employed in the NT (thus likely drawing scribal attention); cf. Rom 8:9 (“the Spirit of Christ”); Phil 1:19 (“the Spirit of Jesus Christ”); 2 Cor 3:17 (“the Spirit of the Lord”). The omission of τοῦ υἱοῦ, “the Son” (leaving just τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ, “his Spirit”) in \mathfrak{B}^{46} , Marcion, and Augustine is likely secondary and associates the Spirit only with the Father.

εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν (“into our hearts”)—This prepositional phrase is well supported \mathfrak{B}^{46} & A B C D* G) and also the more difficult reading. The switch to ὑμῶν (“your”) in some manuscripts and translations was likely motivated by a desire to assimilate the pronoun to the verb ἐστε (“you are”) at the beginning of the verse. (CC)

because you are sons – Through faith (3:26), the Holy Spirit is received (3:2, 14). (TLSB)

Note that in verse 5^a Paul spoke of mankind in the third person, in 5^b in the first person plural. In verse 6 he speaks of Christians in the second person plural. In verse 7 he speaks of Christians in the second person singular. (Buls)

"Because" in verse 6 is variously translated "because" or "to prove that you are sons" or "inasmuch as." The word denotes both *cause* and *evidence*. God sends His Spirit into our hearts because Jesus took our place under the Law. God sends His Spirit into our hearts as *evidence* of the fact that we are redeemed. Read Galatians 3:1-5. (Buls)

Spirit of his Son. A new “guardian” (v. 2), identified as the “Spirit of God” in Ro 8:9 (see Ro 8:2; Eph 1:13–14). (CSB)

The “Spirit of His Son” prompts the prayer of God’s Son (“Our Father” and so bears witness to the sonship of those who so pray (Mk. 14:36; Rom.8:15). (TLSB)

Note carefully the Trinity in this verse. The Bible always speaks of the Trinity as a *saving* God, in many, many places. Look at Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13. (Buls)

Note that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son. This is one of the proof passages for the *filioque* principle, which means "and from the Son." Look at the Nicene Creed. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into the heart of the repentant sinner to assure that sinner of forgiveness of sins. When that happens that sinner prays: "Abba, Father!" (Buls)

Redemption from condemnation of Law, reception of sonship, and the gift of the Spirit, are a unit. Never separate them. They stand or fall together.

The Spirit Himself testifies to our close relationship with the Father and cries out in prayer to the Father for our needs. We are now heirs entitled to the heavenly inheritance and the benefits of sons and daughters in the Kingdom. (LL)

crying. The Greek for this phrase is a vivid verb expressing deep emotion, often used of an inarticulate cry. In Mt 27:50 it is used of Jesus’ final cry. (CSB)

The Spirit is said to utter this cry when He moves us to utter it. The fact that He is in our hearts is the result of our sonship, and His presence makes this cry possible. (Lenski)

God by His Spirit has given you a filial temper, and taught you to use the language not of servants, but of sons. (CB)

Abba, Father. Expressive of an especially close relationship to God (see also NIV text note). (CSB)

Aram for “papa,” an address of special intimacy not typically found in Judaism. (TLSB)

Paul's first Scriptural argument about justification by faith is by experience, of course, not apart from the means of grace. Faith is never a religious, charismatic, subjective experience apart from the Word of God and the atonement. (Buls)

But God *does* give the Christian experiential evidence. What is the evidence? The Holy Spirit praying in the heart of the believer. And the greatest prayers are like those of Jesus: "Abba, Father." True prayer proves that there is saving faith. Saving faith proves that the individual is a son of God, a free man, and an heir of God and of Christ. (Buls)

Abba is an ancient Palestinian Aramaic baby talk meaning, “Dear Daddy.” The rabbinic teachers of Israel used to say that when a child was weaned it began to say “Abba” and “Imma,” words which exactly correspond to “Daddy” and “Mommy.” Thus abba derives from an intimate family relationship. It is a young child’s word, though there is evidence that it continued to be used by adult sons and daughter, as “Daddy” and “Papa’ are used today. The only use of this Aramaic word in the Greek NT is in Mark 14:36 when Jesus prayed to God in Gethsemane as “Abba Father.” The presence of an Aramaic word in the NT Greek text is in itself rather unique. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

Exhaustive research by biblical scholars has demonstrated that in all the huge literature of ancient Judaism there is not one instance of God being addressed in prayer with the word abba. The word abba was too personal, too familiar and intimate to be appropriate. The Lord was high and lifted up, the incomparable One. He was to be approached with reverence and awe. To call him “Daddy” was unthinkable blasphemy. Yet Jesus prayed like this all the time. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

That Jesus gave Christians the right to address God as abba is usually argued from the wording of the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:1-2). We need to be reminded periodically that the privilege of speaking with God so intimately was not given to even the greatest OT saints. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

Abba represents the essentials of the new relationship with God which Jesus offered men and women who believe on His name. From the Father’s side abba implies many things: (1) His mercy, compassion and love for the child; (2) His personal interest in the child and consistent concern for its good; (3) His willingness to provide for the needs of and given protection to the child; and (4) the use of His mature knowledge, judgment and wisdom in guiding and caring for the child. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

The thought of the apostle is that we sons who are now in full possession of all that we have in the Son and in the Spirit of the Son direct our “Abba Father” to God in our fullness of sonship. (Lenski)

Romans 8:15-16, “¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

In every temptation and weakness, therefore, just cling to Christ and sigh! He gives you the Holy Spirit, who cries: “*Abba*! Father!” Then the Father says: “I do not hear anything in the whole world except this single sigh, which is such a loud cry in My ears that it fills heaven and earth and drowns out all the cries of everything else.” (Luther)

4:7 εἶ (singular “you are”)—The change from the plural verb ἐστε, “you are,” in 4:6 to this singular verb (and singular nouns) in 4:7 is an instance of *orati variata* in accord with Greek idiom. Paul switches back to the plural “you” in 4:8–11.

εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος (“since [you are] a son, [you are] also an heir”)—The δέ (literally, “and”; left untranslated) is continuative. Although all conditional sentences that express a real state of affairs are first class conditionals, not all first class conditionals express reality. This first class conditional sentence does.

διὰ θεοῦ (“through God”)—This reading is strongly supported by \mathfrak{P}^{46} κ^* A B C*, but κ^c C^c D K P Textus Receptus have θεοῦ διὰ Χριστοῦ (“of God through Christ”). The variants διὰ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“through God in Christ Jesus”), μὲν θεοῦ συγκληρονόμος δὲ Χριστοῦ (“fellow heir of God and of Christ”), θεοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of God through Jesus Christ”), διὰ θεόν (“because of/on account of God”), and θεοῦ (“of God”) are all more weakly supported. These scribal variations are, no doubt, a reaction to the unusual notion of God as a mediating figure (“through”), a role normally ascribed to Christ (with God as the source or origin). διὰ θεόν (“because of/on account of God”) in G and 1881 (a fourteenth-century miniscule) appears to be a scribal error with respect to the last letter (ν in place of υ). This reading also removes the perceived difficulty of God as a mediating figure. διὰ θεοῦ (“through God”) occurs only here in the NT, but διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ (“through Jesus Christ and God”) in 1:1 is a close parallel. See also the phrase “through the will of God” (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ), which is unique to the Pauline corpus (Rom 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). (CC)

so you – Continuing to address the Galatians directly in the second person, Paul even switches to the singular pronoun to assure each and every Galatian individually of the blessings brought by the Savior sent at God’s good time. (PBC)

Singular personal. By God’s grace, each person can regard himself or herself as an heir to all spiritual blessings. (TLSB)

Now comes the grand conclusion in the form of two fact conditions. (Buls)

"Therefore" in view of everything that's been said since Galatians 3:6 where Paul began by discussing the faith of Abraham and thus introduced the Scriptural arguments about justification by faith. Note that "you" is second person singular. "No longer a slave but a son" which means "you are no longer under the bondage and condemnation of the Law but you are free from sin, death, and the devil because Christ, your Substitute, suffered in your stead." (Buls)

But more than that. A second conditional sentence which also goes back at least to 3:29: "If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." The last part of 4:7 is saying that the free person, the believer (see John 8:36) is an heir of everlasting life through the God who redeemed him. (Buls)

Luther: The Holy Spirit was sent first in a manifest and visible form, Acts 2:3. This was the first sending forth of the Holy Spirit; it was necessary in the primitive church, which had to be established with visible signs on account of the unbelievers, as Paul testifies. 1 Corinthians 14:22: "Tongues are a sign, not for

believers but for unbelievers.' But later on, when the church had been gathered and confirmed by these signs, it was not necessary for this visible sending forth of the Holy Spirit to continue. The second sending is that by which the Holy Spirit, through the Word, is sent into the hearts of believers, as is said here: 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.' This happens with a visible form, namely, when through the spoken Word we receive fire and light, by which we are made new and different, and by which a new judgment, new sensations, and new drives arise in us Let everyone accustom himself, therefore, to believe for a certainty that he is in a state of grace and that his person with its works is pleasing to God Therefore we should strive daily to move more and more from uncertainty; and we should make an effort to wipe out completely that wicked idea which has consumed the entire world, namely that a person does not know whether they are in a state of grace. For if we are in doubt about our being in a state of grace and about our being pleasing to God for the sake of Christ, we are denying that Christ has redeemed us and completely denying all His benefits The Holy Spirit's cry in us vastly exceeds, and breaks through, the powerful and horrible cries of the Law, sin, death, and the devil. It penetrates the clouds and heaven, and it reaches all the way to the ears of God In deep terrors and conflicts of conscience we do indeed take hold of Christ and believe that He is our Savior. . . . And this is our foundation: The Gospel commands us to look, not at our own good deeds or perfection but at God Himself as He promises, and at Christ Himself, the Mediator. By contrast the pope commands us to look, not at God as He promises, not at Christ our High Priest, but at our own works and merits And this is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from our selves and places us outside ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive. . . . For in the matter of justification I must be ignorant of the divine Law and not permit it to rule in any way over my conscience Therefore we come to these eternal goods -- the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and eternal life -- not actively but passively. Nothing whatever interferes here; faith alone takes hold of the offered promise. (Buls)

no longer a slave but his son – This goes back to verse 1 that shows this person has attained his majority who possesses and enjoys the full benefits of an heir. (Lenski)

As non-Jews, the Gentile Galatians never were under the specific Mosaic Law. But they too had been freed from a tremendous burden of legal requirements – in their case, one imposed by their own former false ideas of how they needed to serve their pagan idols and “non-gods.” (PBC)

since...area son...also an heir – Whoever is a son must be an heir as well. For merely by being born he deserves to be an heir. No work and no merit brings him the inheritance, but only his birth. Thus he obtains the inheritance in a purely passive, not in an active way; that is, just his being born, not his producing or working or worrying, makes him an heir. He does not do anything toward his being born but merely lets it happen. Therefore we come to these eternal goods—the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and eternal life—not actively but passively. Nothing whatever interferes here; faith alone takes hold of the offered promise. (Luther)

through God – This is due entirely to God. (Lenski)

4:1–7 The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children, redeemed by Jesus Christ and made full heirs of the promise to Abraham. The Spirit never derides God’s Son or spiritual matters (1Co 12:3). Christ earned for us the right to call God “our Father,” a prayer taught only by the Spirit. • Dear Father, in confidence and boldness I bring my needs before You. Hear me for the sake of Jesus alone. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 2:13-23

The Escape to Egypt

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “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.” ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

2:13-23 Mt 2:13–23 continues the account of Jesus’ earliest years and of the radical contrast between the two kings (Jesus versus Herod/Archelaus). These verses are also remarkable in that in the compass of one page of Greek text, Matthew gives us no less than three of his ten OT citation formulas (this happened “in order that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled,” 2:15, 17, 23). Both in the way that he narrates the events of this text and in the particular OT citations that he applies to the child, Matthew proclaims that Jesus is the true King of God’s people—and even more than that, Jesus himself embodies the people. Matthew’s Christological focus shifts in a remarkable way. As chapter 2 progresses, Jesus’ identity as “King of the Jews” (2:2) leads into another proclamation about the child whose life must be saved by God and faithful Joseph. Jesus *is* the people of God, summed up in himself; he is “Israel reduced to one.” Jesus is God’s Son on behalf of the nation, God’s son (Mt 2:15, citing Hos 11:1; cf. Ex 4:22; Deut 8:1–5; Jer 31:20 [LXX 38:20]). We learn from Matthew 2 that Jesus’ identity as Son of God denotes not only *who* he is, but also *what* he has come to do and *how* he will do it. (CC)

The contrasting irony between the power of the evil King Herod, and then his son Archelaus, and God’s plans for Jesus is laid bare through Matthew’s structuring of 2:13–23. In 2:13–15, Matthew rapidly tells how in a dream God revealed to Joseph that Herod was planning to kill the child and how God directed Joseph to flee to Egypt. Joseph obeys, and with the child and the child’s mother, he departs to Egypt and stays there until Herod’s death. The purpose of this movement to Egypt and back was to fulfill the Scripture of Hos 11:1. (CC)

Remarkably, the evangelist first narrates both the holy family’s flight to Egypt and its significance as OT fulfillment. Only after that does Matthew describe that when Herod realized that he had been mocked by the Magi, he slaughtered the children of Bethlehem and then sometime later, died (2:16–19). Thus Matthew first gives his readers/hearers the divine overview and scriptural fulfillment (2:13–15), and only after that does he describe the historical events (2:16–19). The message is clear: the evil kings will have no power over this child! Neither Herod nor his son has ultimate control over these events. The child is the one who fulfills Scripture. In 2:16–23, Matthew narrates rapidly these events: (1) Herod’s unsuccessful attempt to slay Jesus and his murder of Bethlehem’s children; (2) the death of Herod; (3) Archelaus’ accession to the throne of Judea; and (4) the holy family’s residence in Nazareth of Galilee. As Dorothy Jean Weaver has put it so well:

All outward evidence to the contrary, Herod is not in fact the genuine “king over Judea” nor is his “power” genuine power. Instead, true kingship belongs to Jesus “the one who has been born king of the Jews” [2:2]; and true power belongs to Jesus “the child” (2:8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21), who says nothing, takes no actions, and is by contrast totally vulnerable to the initiatives of those around him. And with this fundamental redefinition of terms the narrator signals to the reader that from here on and throughout the narrative both “kingship” and “power” are realities to be understood in a paradoxical light and to be identified in the unlikeliest of forms and places.

Yes, in the unlikeliest of places Jesus establishes the reign of God—even on a cross, under a sign that proclaims, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (27:37). Even the sequence of Matthew’s narrative in

2:13–23 proclaims God’s surprising and lowly ways of ruling and saving. Herod plots and acts in vain; even his madness serves the fulfillment of Scripture by Jesus (2:15, 17–18, 23). (CC)

But there is much more. In 2:13–23 Matthew proclaims remarkable truth about Jesus through the three OT fulfillment citations. In the first two citations (in 2:15 and 2:17–18, from Hos 11:1 and Jer 31:15 [LXX 38:15], respectively), Matthew develops a remarkable typology: Jesus is the “embodiment” or “representative” or “summary” of the nation of Israel. Under the leadership of Moses, God had liberated his “son” from Egypt (Hos 11:1). But this nation-son has rebelled against God and desperately needs the salvation that Jesus has come to bring to his people (1:21). In the third citation (2:23), Matthew offers a sort of summary statement regarding the prophetic Scriptures’ message that the Messiah will be despised and rejected; see the commentary below for the explication of those passages and the Christology they entail. Before commenting upon the typological significance of the OT citations in this section, however, I should offer the reasons why a very common view should (at the least) be downplayed severely. (CC)

2:13–15 Matthew narrates how God’s angel came to Joseph in a dream and warned him to take “the child and his mother” to Egypt, to keep the child safe from Herod’s lethal plotting. Joseph obeyed, and remained in Egypt until Herod’s death. These events took place, according to Matthew, for the purpose of fulfilling the Lord’s Word through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” This is a direct citation from Hos 11:1 in which Matthew has specifically preserved the singular noun “son” in the Hebrew as opposed to the LXX’s plural “his children” (see the textual note on 2:15). In order to grasp the significance of this OT citation, we will look at the context of Hos 11:1 and then compare the message therein with how the citation functions in the Gospel’s narrative. (CC)

Hos 11:1 stands in the middle of the prophet’s oracle concerning rebellious and sinful Israel. The threat of judgment is prominent throughout Hosea 9–10. The nation’s idolatry (10:5–6) and injustice (10:13) have brought God’s promise to wage war and destroy (10:14–15). Hosea 11, even though it contains moving declarations of God’s love for Israel (11:1–4), continues chapter 10’s theme of judgment upon Israel at the hands of Assyria (11:5–7), though the promise of eventual restoration for Ephraim is also clearly present (11:8–11). (CC)

Three points may be emphasized about Hos 11:1 in its original context. In the first place, Hos 11:1 was not a prediction in the usual sense of the word. This verse forms part of the prophet’s oracle against Israel and specifically recalls Israel’s past history at the time of the exodus: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” In the second place, the prophet’s language of the nation as “God’s son” reflects of a common OT articulation that originated at the time of the exodus in God’s words to Moses in Ex 4:22–23: “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says Yahweh: 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.’ ” To emphasize, *at the exodus* Yahweh became Father to a “son,” the nation Israel, in fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 2:24–25; 3:6, 14–16). Third, Hos 11:1 contrasts the exodus (fifteenth century BC), when God in love chose the nation Israel to be his “son,” with the subsequent history of the nation that rebelled against the Lord, all the way down to the time of the prophet himself some seven centuries later (eighth century BC). Israel in Hos 11:1 had failed to be the “son” God chose the nation to be, and so the people stood under the threat of God’s judgment. (CC)

Now in the context of Matthew’s Gospel, a “son” has come to save his people from their sins (1:21). He is “Son of David,” “Son of Abraham,” and “Christ” (1:1). Yet he is not Joseph’s son, but rather is God’s Son, as 1:18–25 has made clear. Through the OT citation from Hos 11:1, however, Matthew presents an additional layer of meaning for Jesus’ identity as God’s Son. Matthew here is offering a “Jesus as Israel” typology that involves comparison and contrast, and that assumes that God has now begun to perform his greater act of end-time salvation of which the exodus, great though it was, served as only the type. Before

describing more fully the implications of Jesus' identity as Israel/Son of God, a few words are in order about the complex and somewhat protean topic of biblical typology. (CC)

Rather than attempt to discuss the full range of scholarly description and definition, I can offer a brief synopsis of salient points from the particularly helpful discussion in Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture*. Davidson attempts an inductive study of key NT texts in order to arrive at a description of how the NT writers read the OT typologically. He describes the "historical" and "theological" structures involved in the argument of 1 Cor 10:1–13, placing greatest emphasis upon that text since his study then reveals a continuity between the hermeneutics of 1 Cor 10:1–13 and other significant NT passages that employ typology. (CC)

Three "historical structures" are involved when the NT authors read the OT typologically according to Davidson. First, the OT types are events, "historical realities." "Second, there is a *historical correspondence* between the OT events and the NT realities." This correspondence entails "specific parallel details as well as more general 'similar situations.'" Third, there is an increase or escalation in the movement from OT type to NT antitype "because the NT realities constitute the climactic, eschatological destination toward which the OT events point." (CC)

Davidson determined that four "theological structures" are also characteristic of NT typological readings of the OT. First, the NT fulfillment of the OT type is understood eschatologically, that is, as a part of the final in-breaking of God's reign, which has already begun in the earthly ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and which will be completed at his return. Second, the NT antitypes relate to and partake of Christological and soteriological realities: "The τύποι [OT 'types'] and NT correspondents carry either a positive or negative moral 'charge' depending upon their relationship to Christ." Third, there is an ecclesiological structure in that the church as the true continuation of God's covenant people Israel participates in the NT realities that fulfill the OT types. Fourth and finally, there is a complex prophetic structure in that the OT types (a) were prefigurations of NT realities, (b) were arranged by divine design, and (c) possessed a *prosecutive*, "must-needs-be" character that not only anticipated, but required their fulfillment in NT realities. That is to say, it is not that types only came into existence in light of later NT retrospection. Rather, the NT proclaims that all along God designed the OT realities and events as forward-looking, even if the realities to which they pointed were not made explicit until the NT writers proclaimed their fulfillments in Christ and his church. Within this broad historical and theological framework as generally described by Davidson, then, there is room for both Law and Gospel—negative contrasts and exhortation, and positive comparison and proclamation. (CC)

This understanding of typology helps us comprehend Mt 2:15. Jesus, Son of God, travels to Egypt because of the threat to his life, and then he returns to Israel after Herod dies and the threat has been removed. This happened so that Hos 11:1 "might be fulfilled" (Mt 2:15), even though the prophetic passage was not worded as a prediction. Rather, Hosea described a past *history* that was incomplete—the story of a people who failed to achieve the purpose for which God had called them out of Egypt. Therefore Israel's history yearned for repair and restoration and achievement of God's *telos*. God had chosen a people to be his own and loved them like a father loves his son. The son, however, did not requite his love, but instead ran away, and is running away still (see the commentary on 3:1–12). What God did once to make for himself a people, *in history* God is now again doing in a greater and unexpected way, for the last days have begun, the Christ has been born, and the reign of heaven is at hand (3:2). The first exodus, by the saving power of God, took place when God redeemed his "son" from bondage in Egypt. (Hos 11:1). The second and greater end-time exodus, by the saving power of God, will take place through God's perfect Son, on behalf of God's fallen and sinful "son." (CC)

Jesus the individual is God's Son in his own person. Even as a child, Jesus is God's Son, not by any process of adoption, but by right. He recapitulates or summarizes and repeats the history of the nation of

Israel. The sons of Israel went down to Egypt and came up again; Jesus the Son goes down to Egypt and comes up again. The sons of Israel came up from Egypt because God was freeing them from bondage and captivity. Jesus, on the other hand, comes up from Egypt in order that he might live and grow and finally save his people from their bondage to sin (Mt 1:21). With the first “son,” God was acting to save “him.” God had acted to save his second and greater Son from Herod (Mt 2:12–15), and now God is acting so that, through Jesus, he would save Israel. *Historically*, Jesus takes the place of Israel, and reenacts its history, but where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds. (CC)

Theologically, this “Jesus as Israel” typology proclaims that God’s Son has come to take the place of Israel, God’s son. This vicarious aspect of the typology comes to clearer focus in the Baptism that Jesus receives from John (3:13–17) and in his conflict with Satan in the wilderness (4:1–11). It is implicit already here in 2:15 in the way that Matthew proclaims OT fulfillment in the movements of the Child-Messiah. Who is Jesus? He is Israel, the nation, summed up into himself. What has he come to do? To save his people from their sins (1:21), to be sure. Yet how is his identity as *Son* of God involved in that? By undergoing his own exodus from Egypt, Jesus enacts his identity as God’s end-time, final Son. And there is more. This perfect Son offers perfect obedience to his Father’s will to save the people. How will he do that? By going where they went (to Egypt and back), by standing where they stood (in the waters of the Jordan), by fighting and winning spiritual battles where they fought and lost (in the wilderness for a period of forty years), and ultimately, by dying where and how they deserved to die: in their place as the ransom payment in the place of the many (20:28; 26:28). (CC)

Nothing will deter this plan or prevent it from achieving God’s goal. Herod tries to do just that, as only Matthew’s narrative makes known to us. Although Herod fails in his purpose, he succeeds in murdering perhaps twenty male children, two years old and younger, in and around the village of Bethlehem. God allowed this evil deed, but he did not purpose it, nor is he ever the cause of evil. That is why the evangelist writes: “Then [τότε] what was spoken ... was fulfilled” (2:17) instead of his usual formula for fulfillment using a purpose clause, “in order that [ἵνα or ὅπως] what was spoken ... might be fulfilled.” The only other time Matthew uses this construction is in 27:9, regarding the money paid Judas for betraying Jesus—another evil deed that God foreknew, but did not purpose. Because the slaughter of Bethlehem’s children and the subsequent mourning played a role in the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, it stands as an antitype for the mothers of Israel (“Rachel” of Jer 31:15) who mourned when their children were taken from them into exile during the time of the prophet Jeremiah. (CC)

Interpreters often point out that Jer 31:15, which speaks of Rachel weeping, is the only gloomy note in the entire chapter of its OT context. The prophet Jeremiah mentions the weeping in Ramah as a way of describing the exile into which Judah’s captives have gone under the power of Babylonian conquest (Jer 31:15; cf. 40:1–2). Rachel’s “children” (31:15) stand for the nation suffering under divine judgment. Jeremiah quickly rushes in, with the next verses, to proclaim hope and the promise of return from exile and restoration of Israel’s fortunes (31:16–19). God declares his love for his “son” Ephraim (31:20) and ultimately promises a new covenant and the forgiveness of sins (31:31–34). Accordingly, although Rachel weeps rightly over the exile, the divine judgment imposed upon the nation for its sin, there is hope and the promise of restoration. (CC)

In a much greater way, so it is in Matthew 2. Evil has come upon the land, though it is not God’s purposeful punishment, but is caused by Herod’s malice (see above on “*then* what was spoken ... was fulfilled” in 2:17). Nevertheless, the restoration of the nation and the promised new covenant are already dawning in the person of God’s Son, who comes to restore God’s “son.” God’s Son will establish a renewed and better covenant between God and Israel, indeed, God and all humanity. God will accomplish this plan in his Son, Jesus. Now that the scriptural plan has begun to be fulfilled, even unthinkable evil such as the murder of Bethlehem’s children can serve and become part of what God is doing in and through Jesus. After the sixth-century exile to Babylon and weeping over judgment and sin, God brought

hope. In a greater and final way, the sins of the people and their leaders will not have the last word in Bethlehem or in Israel. In the Christ, God's Son on behalf of God's "son," God will bring hope and restoration for all humanity. (CC)

Should the "holy innocents" be regarded as *martyrs*? From one perspective, the answer would be negative. We normally think of martyrs as those who have been killed because they confess faith in Christ, and that is not why Herod slew the children of Bethlehem. Rather, he killed them because he feared one of them *might be* the Christ. While Matthew's readers/hearers can certainly expect that the male children in Bethlehem would have been circumcised and thus were members of God's covenant people, they were not martyrs as we normally use that term. (CC)

However, the children of Bethlehem do occupy a unique place in Christian history because of what God was doing in Jesus at that unique time and place. Indeed God was at work and was even able to take up human evil and sin and cause it to be known as part of the scriptural plan that was fulfilled by the Christ Child. The babes of Bethlehem would not have been slaughtered if the Christ had not been born among them. In that sense, then, they did die for the sake of Christ. Their deaths on account of Christ prefigured the martyrdom of those who would bear Christ's name. Thus the church's observation of Holy Innocents' Day on December 28 can rightly be the occasion—as will all the martyrs' days—to praise and honor the One who died and rose for the martyrs and for all. (CC)

Herod the Great probably died in 4 BC, although there is a scholarly debate surrounding the absolute dates involved. Although Matthew does not tell us how long the holy family stayed in Egypt after Herod's death, it had to encompass the time it took for the various delegations to go to Rome and for the imperial deliberations to seat Archelaus as ruler of Judea. When Joseph, with Mary and her child, drew near to Judea, however, Archelaus' already well-deserved reputation for violence gave Joseph pause, and he was afraid to go back there (2:22). (CC)

Once again, God warned Joseph in a dream (2:22; see also 1:20; 2:13, 19), and he departed to Galilee and dwelt in Nazareth. Thus it came about that the Christ, Son of David (1:1) and Son of God (2:15), would grow up in a town that is not even mentioned in the OT, and to which no messianic promises were attached. Yet the prophets had foretold that God's Messiah would be "despised and rejected of men" (Is 53:3). His lowly and unexpected heritage in Nazareth would become a byword to some, a signal that they rejected him. (For the negative connotations attached to "Nazarene," see the textual note on it in Mt 2:23.) This is God's way when his salvation comes down: men will despise it until light dawns upon them. (CC)

2:13 The miraculous events surrounding the birth of our Lord continue into his early childhood as the holy family is afforded divine protection and guidance. "An angel" may refer to the same unnamed angel who informed Joseph of the incarnation, since the identical Greek phrase occurs in 1:20. That revelation, like the two described in vv 12, 13, occurred in a dream—a frequent mode of divine communication in the Old Testament (cf. Num 12:6–8; Joel 2:28). In contrast, the announcements to Zechariah and Mary were made by the angel Gabriel in person (Lk 1:11–38). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

Many people closely associate the birth of Christ with the adoration of the Magi, but the text indicates that the Magi may have visited up to two years later. First, in Mt 2:11, they are said to have entered the house (*oikia*) where Jesus and Mary were, not the stable in which he was born. Second, 2:16 indicates that Christ may have been born up to two years before the Magi arrived in Judea. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

An angel of the Lord – ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ’ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ—This “angel of the Lord,” like the one in 1:20 (also the one in 2:19), is not to be identified with the OT “Angel of Yahweh.” The verb φαίνεται is a historical present tense, the first such usage in Matthew’s Gospel. The same form, as indeed this entire clause, is precisely repeated in 2:19, and this repetition links 2:13–18 to 2:19–23. In and of itself, an occurrence of the historical present in narratives is not of great significance. However, it is not a common feature of Matthew’s style (except for forms of λέγω that introduce direct discourse; see, e.g., 4:6, 10, 19). Therefore, I have chosen to give the historical presents in Matthew’s narrative an emphatic translation, as here: “An angel of the Lord *did* appear.” (CC)

In a dream – This mode of revelation points to the gospel narrative as fulfilling the OT, in which dreams, along with visions, were God’s regular method of revealing His will. However, Scriptures also frequently warns against believing false claims of prophetic dreams. How blessed we are to have the sure written Word in contrast to the uncertain origin of dreams and visions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Flee to Egypt – After all the trouble and suffering the Israelites had endured in Egypt before the exodus, it might seem like a strange place for Joseph and Mary to go with the Christ Child. But it was not strange at all. First of all, we need to realize that Egypt had been a traditional place of refuge. Abraham had gone to Egypt during a famine (Genesis 12:10). Jacob and his family of 70 souls took refuge in Egypt for the same reason (Genesis 46), and they became a mighty nation there. They remained in Egypt until God led them out under Moses some 400 years later. Jeroboam fled to Egypt when Solomon tried to kill him (1 Kings 11:40), and Uriah also fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 26:21-23). There were many Jews in Egypt at this time, so Mary and Joseph could feel quite at home and secure there. Furthermore, Matthew informs us that the flight to Egypt (and the return to the land of Israel) fulfilled a prophecy of Hosea (11:1). God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and their exodus foreshadowed the calling of God’s Son from Egypt. Matthew directly states that Hosea was not only recording an event in Israel’s history; he was also foretelling an event in the life of God’s Son, the Messiah. (PBC)

C 175 mi SW of Jerusalem, outside Herod’s jurisdiction. Joseph was told to stay in Egypt till he received further instructions. (TLSB)

Must we say that God was unable to protect His Son in Bethlehem? By no means. One word only, and all the designs of Herod would have been brought to naught. In the eternal council of God, however, there was laid out for Jesus a path in humility and suffering. Therefore it was prophesied, and therefore it must come to pass. (Ylvisaker)

2:14 *he (Joseph)* – Joseph’s father, Abraham, in faith “when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Heb 11:8). So now Joseph also goes in faith without knowing where exactly in Egypt they were to live. Notice the word order that places the principal person first “take *the child* and his mother.” While *anachōreō* in v 13 simply means “depart,” in this verse it has the nuance “withdraw, take refuge” (*BAGD* p. 63b, 2.b.). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

DURING THE NIGHT – νυκτός—This is the classical Greek use of a word for time (“day,” “hour,” “night,” etc.) in the genitive case with an adverbial meaning to express the “time within which” the action of the clause’s verb occurred. The actions “got up,” “took,” and “departed” all happened “during the night,” the same evening Joseph learned of the danger to the child. (CC)

Joseph obeyed the angel’s command that very night. (TLSB)

LEFT – In verse 13 *anachoreo* simply means “depart,” in this verse it has the nuance “withdraw, take refuge.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

TO MOVE ON – Yes, tell the church of Jesus Christ to move on! Sometimes we see only the dangers ahead. The forces of godlessness increase. The frontiers of an unbelieving world close in. Whatever financial gains we make are more than used up in inflationary costs. We can barely maintain the church activities which we have begun. How can we hope to advance in our mission work? And besides, who will listen to us any more in this corrupt, evil world! How did we ever get involved in all our expansion work? Let’s dig a hole for ourselves and crawl in! Tell the people of God to move on! What will happen to the enemy is vividly pictured in verses 23-31. (PBC – Exodus 14)

2:15 *the death of Herod.* In 4 B.C. (CSB)

Out of Egypt I called my son. This quotation from Hos 11:1 originally referred to God’s calling the nation of Israel out of Egypt in the time of Moses. But Matthew, under the inspiration of the Spirit, applies it also to Jesus. He sees the history of Israel (God’s children) recapitulated in the life of Jesus (God’s unique Son). Just as Israel as an infant nation went down into Egypt, so the child Jesus went there. And as Israel was led by God out of Egypt, so also was Jesus. How long Jesus and his parents were in Egypt is not known. (CSB)

In Hos 11:1, the Lord referred to Israel as “My son,” whom He called out of Egypt at the time of the exodus. Jesus is here named as God’s one and only Son, who was the representative and substitute for all Israel. God would also call this Son out of Egypt to redeem His sinful people. (TLSB)

Why to Egypt? There were closer safe places, and Egypt was filled with idolatry and hatred toward the Israelites. Or why didn’t God cause Herod to die a few years earlier than he did (v 20)? Whether or not Joseph had these questions, he simply obeyed in faith. And whether Joseph realized it or not, in this way the prophecy of Hos 11:1 was fulfilled. Just as God’s children—the sons of Israel—had sojourned there, suffering persecution, so God’s Son, persecuted, did too, until he too was led into the land first promised to Abraham some two millennia earlier. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

But the similarity stops there. Jesus recapitulated the history of the nation of Israel, but without committing the nation’s sins. When the holy family returned to Israel (vv 19–23), there was no grumbling, no desire to return to the fleshpots of Egypt, no forty-year punishment of wandering in the wilderness, no doubts about their ability to enter the land as God instructed. Christ took Israel’s place and ours, walking in their shoes and ours, facing the same dangers and hardships, but without sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

In short, this history of Christ’s early life shows that even from birth he was fulfilling the law for us, completing perfectly what Israel (and we) failed to do. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

Matthew again emphasizes how Jesus, even as a toddler, is fulfilling the OT Scriptures. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

The OT citation is from Hos 11:1b. A literal translation of the entire poetic verse in the MT is this:

For Israel [was] a youth and I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son [לְבָנִי].

The LXX has one crucial difference from the MT, namely, in how it treats the MT’s reference to Israel as Yahweh’s “son.” The LXX, literally rendered, reads: “Because Israel [was] a babe and I loved him, and

out of Egypt I summoned his children” (μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ). On the assumption that Matthew was aware of the LXX text known to us, he avoided it and instead gave his own literal translation of the MT’s last clause: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου, Mt 2:15). Matthew has chosen the simple verb ἐκάλεσα (from καλέω) rather than the compound form in the LXX (from μετακαλέω). Most importantly, he has preserved the singular reference to “son” as opposed to the LXX’s “children.” This is the first time in Matthew that Jesus is explicitly referred to as God’s “Son.” Theologically, this OT citation is of immense importance. (CC)

2:13–15 After God’s warning, Joseph immediately flees with his family in the middle of the night. This is an example of how God protects His people. When threatening challenges surround us, we trust that God is in control and that He will protect us. Most of all, we know that He has already protected us from our greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil. • Heavenly Father, keep me from ever doubting Your protecting care. Amen. (TLSB)

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

2:16-18 These verses are not part of the pericope, but we may note in passing that “these children became the ‘protomartyrs’ among the witnesses of Christ,” the first to die on account of Christ (Joh. Ylvisaker, *The Gospels* [Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1977] p. 98). Read also Rev 12:2–6. Satan, the red dragon, was behind the attempt to kill the baby Jesus. He is also behind the killing of many children through abortion, etc. This author had a former Satanist confess that she had two abortions for the sole purpose of sacrificing them to Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 3, Part 1)

2:16 *saw that he had been tricked.* Herod waited in vain for the Magi to return and report where the new king was living. (TLSB)

kill all the boys ... two years old and under. The number killed has often been exaggerated as being in the thousands. In so small a village as Bethlehem, however (even with the surrounding area included), the number was probably not large—though the act, of course, was no less brutal. (CSB)

The figure probably reflects how long it had been since the Magi first saw the star. Since Herod did not know which young boy might be his potential rival, he ordered a mass killing of all male children up to two years old in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. These young boys, traditionally called “The Holy Innocents,” are regarded as the first martyrs in the NT. (TLSB)

Satan, the red dragon, was behind the attempt to kill the baby Jesus. He is also behind the killing of many children through abortion. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

2:17 *was fulfilled* – τότε ἐπληρώθη τὸ ῥηθὲν—Matthew normally introduces his OT fulfillment citations with either ἵνα or ὅπως to form a purpose clause: ἵνα/ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν, “in order that what was spoken ... might be fulfilled.” Only here and in 27:9 (regarding the payment given Judas and his suicide) does Matthew describe the fulfillment of Scripture using a temporal clause: “*Then* [τότε] what was spoken ... was fulfilled.” Although God takes and uses evil deeds such as the slaughter of Bethlehem’s little ones to bring his scriptural plan and promise to fruition, Matthew avoids declaring that it was God’s purpose that the children in Bethlehem die (or that Judas commit suicide). (CC)

2:18 *Ramah...Rachel weeping for her children* – Ramah was five miles north of Jerusalem, on the border of Israel. It was a place where Jewish captives had been assembled for deportation to Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1). Rachel was Jacob’s favorite wife, childless for years, finally the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. She died in childbirth. Rachel weeping for her children represented all the Jewish mothers who wept over Israel’s tragedy in the days of Jeremiah. She also typifies the grieving mothers at Bethlehem as Matthew points out. (PBC)

Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, died in childbirth and was buried in Ramah, just north of Jerusalem (Gn 35:16–20). Years later, Jeremiah pictured Rachel weeping for the Israelites who were exiled to Babylon. These OT stories of suffering anticipated the suffering caused by Herod. The sound of weeping was heard again when Herod slaughtered the infant boys of Bethlehem. (TLSB)

But God acted in Bethlehem, scarred by atrocity and horror, by sending His own Son to bring life and hope. Because of His death on the cross for our sins, His triumphant resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven, He will one day return to wipe all tears from our eyes. (LL)

φωνὴ ἐν Ῥαμὰ ἠκούσθη ...—The OT citation is from Jer 31:15 (LXX 38:15). Matthew’s form of the verse differs from both the LXX and the MT, although none of the differences materially affect the meaning of the citation. Scholars do not agree on how to account for Matthew’s form. The LXX manuscripts B and A actually differ significantly from one another! LXX Jer 38:15 is not a particularly skillful translation of MT Jer 31:15. The Hebrew nouns in the second poetic line, “wailing” and “weeping of bitterness,” are almost surely to be taken in apposition to “voice” in the first line, but the LXX gives the nouns in the second line as genitives, resulting in “A voice is heard in Ramah *of* lament and weeping and mourning.” (CC)

One part of Matthew’s version of the OT citation may be of some importance. The Hebrew of Jer 31:15d–e is, literally, “Rachel is weeping for her sons; she is refusing to be comforted for her sons”; thus the prepositional phrase לְבָנָיָהּ, “for her sons,” occurs twice. The LXX does not reflect the first instance of the prepositional phrase, and for the second “for her sons” it uses ἐπὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτῆς, which is a literal and excellent translation of the Hebrew phrase. Matthew’s citation does not reflect the second instance of the prepositional phrase, and for the first one Matthew gives us Rachel lamenting “her children” (τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς). While this too is an acceptable and accurate rendering of the Hebrew phrase, there may be a conscious choice on Matthew’s part not to designate the male children of Bethlehem as Rachel’s *sons*; hence Matthew uses “children” (τέκνα) instead of “sons” (υἱοῖς in the second instance in the LXX). (CC)

In chapter 2, Matthew is concerned to identify only one “son” in the narrative, namely, Jesus, the Son of God. Although certainty is not possible, it is at least plausible to see a deliberate choice by the evangelist to offer an accurate rendering of Jer 31:15 (LXX 38:15) that avoids any confusion over who is the “son” in this account. Matthew has taken “sons” in both the LXX and the MT and deliberately rendered it as “children.” His purpose in so doing is to emphasize that Jesus is the true and only “son” and fulfillment of all of Israel’s history. In Matthew 1–4 only Jesus is called “son” (υἱός), and he is so designated repeatedly.” (CC)

2:16–18 The young boys of Bethlehem die, but Jesus escapes. He escapes death at the hands of Herod, that later He might die on the cross for all sinners, even ones so cruel as Herod or so young as two-year-olds. Jesus sacrificed His innocent life to redeem all people from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Trusting in Jesus, we have perfect innocence before our Father in heaven. • We praise You, Jesus, for willingly giving up Your life at the proper time for our salvation. Amen. (TLSB)

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.” ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. ²³ And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

2:19 when *Herod died* – Josephus, the Jewish historian of that period, relates that Herod suffered a terrible disease which burned him inwardly and caused a stench for others around him. After Herod died, Caesar Augustus divided Herod's portion of the empire between Herod's three sons. To Archelaus one half of the kingdom was given, which was Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. He was to become king, if he proved worthy of the position, but that was not to be the case. Nine years later charges against him were leveled by his brothers, and he was exiled to Vienne, where he died. Antipas was given Galilee and Perea, and he ruled 42 years before he was driven into exile. He was the murderer of Christ's forerunner, and the one whom Jesus called a fox. Philip was given five smaller tracts of land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

It may have been only a matter of a few months that Joseph and Mary and the Christ Child remained in Egypt. Herod died about Easter time 4 B.C. The Jewish historian Josephus in his Antiquities reports that Herod “died of...ulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot-filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath, and neither physician nor warm baths led to recovery.” (PBC)

2:20-21 *land of Israel* – This expression, used nowhere else in the NT, suggests that Jesus' return from Egypt was like ancient Israel's leaving Egyptian slavery to dwell in the Promised Land. (TLSB)

2:22 *Archelaus*. This son of Herod the Great ruled over Judea and Samaria for only ten years (4 B.C.–A.D. 6). He was unusually cruel and tyrannical and so was deposed. Judea then became a Roman province, administered by prefects appointed by the emperor. (CSB)

After Herod's death, this son was made ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. A brutal tyrant, he was deposed and exiled in AD 6. (TLSB)

After the death of Herod, Caesar Augustus divided Herod's portion of the empire between Herod's three sons. To Archelaus one half of the kingdom was given, which was Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. He was to become king, if he proved worthy the position, but that was not to be the case. Nine years later charges against him were leveled by his brothers, and he was exiled to Vienne, where he died. Antipas was given Galilee and Perea, and he ruled 42 years before he was driven into exile. He was the murdered of Christ's forerunner, and the one whom Jesus called a fox. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Galilee. The northern part of Palestine in Jesus' day. (CSB)

Joseph had evidently planned to go back to Bethlehem in Judea, but God if the directed him elsewhere. (TLSB)

The temple authorities in Jerusalem tended to look down on people living in Galilee because they came into contact with many more Gentiles. (TLSB)

2:23 Again a fulfillment of Scripture. While elsewhere Matthew cites specific prophecies by referring to them as spoken by “the prophet,” meaning that he has a specific prophet in mind each time (1:22; 2:5, 15, 17; 3:3; 4:14), here Matthew simply makes a general reference to “what was said through the prophets.” The meaning of this general reference is an old crux that has been the subject of much discussion. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Joseph takes Jesus to Nazareth, an obscure town nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament. The Greek word in our text is not easily related philologically to the town name of Nazareth, and it may have had another meaning than simply “a resident of Nazareth” (cf. *BAGD* p. 532). Nathanael asked, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (Jn 1:46). “Nazarene” appears to have been a synonym for “despised” (cf. Is 53:3, “He was despised and rejected”). Another possibility is that “Nazarene” relates to “Nazirite,” since the Hebrew and Greek words are quite similar. Num 6:1–21 describes the role of a Nazirite. Also, the location of Nazareth in Galilee (v 22) makes the prophecy Matthew describes in 4:12–16 relevant here too. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Perhaps the most plausible explanation is that Matthew is referring to prophecies that the Messiah would be a Branch from the line of David. Is 11:1 uses *netser* (pronounced *nay-tser*), which would be rendered into a Greek word similar to the one in our text. There are also other prophecies of Christ as a Branch or Shoot, but they use a different Hebrew word, *tsemach* (Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12). In any event, the adjective *Nazarene* was frequently applied later to Christ and Christians, both in Scripture and in extra-biblical literature. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 3, Part 1)

Nazareth. A rather obscure town, nowhere mentioned in the OT. It was Jesus’ hometown (13:54–57; see Lk 2:39; 4:16–24; Jn 1:45–46). (CSB)

While Matthew only mentions that Mary and Joseph made their home in Nazareth after the flight to Egypt, Luke notes that Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 1)

Small, insignificant town not mentioned in the OT. Hardly the place from which to expect the Messiah. (TLSB)

Prophets – Does not refer to one prophet but to OT prophets in general. (TLSB)

He will be called a Nazarene. These exact words are not found in the OT and probably refer to several OT prefigurations and/or predictions (note the plural, “prophets”) that the Messiah would be despised (e.g., Ps 22:6; Isa 53:3), for in Jesus’ day “Nazarene” was virtually a synonym for “despised” (see Jn 1:45–46). Some hold that in speaking of Jesus as a “Nazarene,” Matthew is referring primarily to the word “Branch” (Hebrew *nešer*) in Isa 11:1. (CSB)

Because Nazareth was a despised place, someone coming from there would also be despised. Matthew’s comment reflects the surprising character of the outcome of these prophecies. That many would despise the Messiah is reflected in various OT prophecies (cf Ps 22:6–8, 13; Is 53:2–3, 8). (TLSB)

To be called a Nazarene was not a compliment among the Jew. Nazareth was an undistinguished place. When Philip found Nathanael and told him that they had found the Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael’s response was, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46) Pontius Pilate also intended it as sarcasm when he composed the superscription for Jesus’ cross: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (John 19:19). (PBC)

2:19–23 God's revelation leads Joseph to take Mary as his wife. He later flees to Egypt and finally settles permanently in Nazareth with God's guidance. These events may have seemed confusing to Joseph, but God had a plan. All of the Lord's leading was to fulfill OT prophecies. We do not always know where God is leading us, but we can be sure that He will be with us and that His plans are for our good. • Loving Father, help me to pray with Jesus, "Your will be done," and follow where You lead. Amen. (TLSB)