

Matthew 2:16

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-2/matthew-216/>

King Herod is furious when he realizes that the magi tricked him. He sends soldiers to kill all the males in and around the village of Bethlehem under two years of age. Matthew points out that this tragedy fulfills a prophecy from Jeremiah.

There is no apparent parallel account of this event in the Gospels.

Herod was furious when he *saw that he had been tricked by the magi*, and discovered that the *magi* had not told him of the young Messiah's whereabouts. The tyrant who had his own sons killed for threatening his power *became very enraged*. Herod was unable to tolerate the existence of such a child. To quell his wrath, and ensure his reign, Herod sent out butchers to kill *all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from ages two years old and younger*. Herod's rationale for this directive was *according to the time which he had determined from the magi* when he interrogated them; based on when they first observed *His star*, the star of the Messiah's birth (Matthew 2:2). It seems likely Jesus made the journey to Egypt sometime around age one to two, then returned to Israel around age five to six.

There is no direct record of this slaughter outside of Matthew's Gospel, which is not surprising. Bethlehem was a considerably small village, and the murder of children was probably not an unusual event during the reign of Herod. Based on Bethlehem's population, scholars estimate that the number of victims range between a half dozen and two dozen. This coupled with the fact that as heartless as Herod was, he knew there was nothing politically beneficial in boasting about such an order. It was best to keep it quiet. And so he tried. (But of course this intent was thwarted by God).

Sweeping this evil from the public's eye did not comfort the mothers and families of those whose children were slaughtered. The grief was all-too real, and nothing could bring back the innocent lives so cruelly taken. They were given an opportunity to tell their story, and Matthew recorded it for all posterity.

Biblical Text

2:16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.