

Matthew 2:13-23
December 25, 2011

South Plains

January 15, postmarked Memphis, Egypt
From Joseph of Bethlehem to Zechariah.

Letters from Egypt

January 7, postmarked Memphis, Egypt, January 14.

From Mary, espoused wife of Joseph, to Elizabeth. Grace to you. I know you must think I'm awful for not keeping in touch before now. But, we had to leave Bethlehem in a hurry after Joseph had another of his dreams. I'm not complaining. So far, his dreaming has been right on the money.

I must thank you for all your encouragement for the first eight and half months of my pregnancy. The baby is a fine boy we've named Jesus. He's a better traveler than I am after our long journey from Bethlehem to Egypt. You see, right after we had some foreign visitors who looked very official, Joseph was warned in a dream that we had to get out of Israel and go to Egypt. The people here have strange customs and don't speak our language very much, but we manage. It's comforting to remember that our ancestor Jacob took refuge in Egypt back in the day.

Sorry I could not mail this until now. More later.
Love, Mary

Greetings. When I found out that Mary had written your wife, I felt compelled to add this caution. Please do not, I repeat, do not tell anyone in the temple about us. Mary does not know this, but shortly after leaving Bethlehem Herod sent soldiers looking for us. Apparently, our foreign visitors, who were so generous with their gifts, had spoken to Herod about 'the king of the Jews.' The King was determined to exterminate any competition. When the soldiers could not find us, they were ordered to kill every male child under the age of two.

We may need to keep moving. I know I can trust you, so we'll try to keep you and Elizabeth informed.

Your friend, Joseph

January 25, postmarked Crocodilopolis, Egypt
From Mary, wife of Joseph, to Elizabeth.

Grace to you and your house. Well, we've moved again as you can see. Have you ever heard of a city named after an animal? We're really settled in Crocodilopolis for a while until Joseph feels safe about returning home. He won't say much, but the caravans tell awful stories about the violence around Jerusalem. The saying is that the King is so jealous; you'd be safer as Herod's pig than Herod's son.

I thank God every day we are relatively safe. But, I tell you, life on the run is hard. We're living in a sort of ghetto called a refugee camp with other Jews. Despite being so cosmopolitan, Egyptians are suspicious of us. I'll be a lot kinder to foreigners if I ever get back home.

How's baby John? He must be talking. I know you hoped he would be a preacher. I want Jesus to be a carpenter and take over Joseph's business. It's a marketable skill, even here in Egypt. I'm sure he'll be smart and a good provider.

Love to all three of you, Mary

April 1st, postmarked Pelusium, Egypt
From Mary, wife of Joseph, to Elizabeth.

Grace and peace. As you can see, we've moved once again to the easternmost city in Egypt, hoping to get news that we can return to Israel. There are reports that Herod is terminally ill. Is it a sin to pray for our enemy's death? After two years in this pagan country, I'm ready for home. Joseph had another dream, but we're waiting to confirm the news.

It looks like we won't be moving back to Judea. Joseph is talking about Nazareth as a place to set up his shop. How curious that our lives are so controlled by our need to find a safe place for our child, Jesus. He's worth it. If we move in Nazareth, he'll be a Nazirite. Get the joke? Samson was called a nazirite because he was consecrated to God and didn't cut his hair. Bad joke, I guess, since Samson did not have a happy end to his life.

God has provided for us at every step along this miraculous journey. Glory to God in the highest! We'll see you in Jerusalem soon.

Love, Mary