

The True Son of God

Matthew 2:13-23

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This morning we will wrap up Matthew's account of Jesus' birth and early childhood. In these first two chapters, Matthew quotes Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, and Jeremiah. In Matthew 1:23, he quotes Isaiah 7:14. In Matthew 2:6, he quotes Micah 5:2. In Matthew 2:15, he quotes Hosea 11:1. In Matthew 2:18, he quotes Jeremiah 31:15. Finally, in Matthew 2:23, Matthew points us to an unusual fulfillment of prophecy tied to Isaiah 11:1 and Isaiah 53:3.

Matthew is not only teaching us that Jesus is the True Son of God. By citing so much of the Old Testament, he also teaches us that *Christianity was not a new religion*. Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's promises, and we can hope in Him because in Him we learned that God is faithful to His Son in His suffering, and therefore God will be faithful to His children in their suffering.

We are looking at three fulfillments of prophecy in our text this morning. So, we just finished Isaiah a few weeks ago, and in Isaiah, we learned that one of his goals in his writing was to prepare us to recognize the Son of God when He arrived. Matthew is on the other end of the spectrum, and he wrote to show us that the Son of God had arrived. I think it was Spurgeon who said, "*In the Old Testament, the New Testament is concealed, and in the New Testament the Old Testament is revealed.*" In Matthew 1 & 2, we see greater revelation of the Old Testament.

Before we jump into the text, I want to talk about prophecy. I need to explain two ways we understand the fulfillment of prophecy. There are two general kinds of fulfillment. There is *precise fulfillment* and *pattern fulfillment*.¹ So, for example, we looked at a *precise fulfillment* of prophecy last Sunday. When the wise men came to Jerusalem and told Herod, they had come to worship the newborn King, for they saw His star. Then Herod gathered all of the religious leaders and asked them where the Messiah would be born, and they quoted Micah 5:2. Matthew 2:5-6 says:

"In Bethlehem of Judea," they told him, "because this is what was written by the prophet:

⁶And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah:

Because out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

It was prophesied the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and He was. This is what we call *precise fulfillment* of a prophecy. *Precise fulfillments* defined exactly what was going to occur.

The second type of fulfillment is called *pattern fulfillment*. It is also called *typology*. *Pattern fulfillment* looks at Scripture and sees patterns of fulfillment in how the redemptive story unfolds and is fulfilled in Jesus.

For example, the author of Hebrews argues that the entire sacrificial system pointed forward to Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for the sin of His people. This is what we call pattern fulfillment. Listen to what scholar D. A. Carson says about *pattern fulfillment*:

In the New Testament, we learn how the law anticipated the gospel, how the Levitical priesthood pointed to a new high priest who would effectively stand between God and humanity and never need replacing, how the ancient kingdom of David served as a model or "type" of kingdom of God, how certain covenants had a built-in obsolescence that lead believers to look forward to the dawning of the promised new covenant [in Jeremiah 31] and much more.²

So, the writer of Hebrews helps us see patterns of redemptive fulfillment by Jesus in the Old Testament. Matthew does the same thing in vv. 13-23.

Pastor Sean O'Donnell gives a helpful illustration when it comes to *pattern fulfillment*. He says pattern fulfillments are like pieces of a double-sided jigsaw puzzle. If you put the pieces of the Old Testament puzzle together on top of a glass-

¹ Sean O'Donnell, *Preaching the Word Series: Matthew*, 51-52

² D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes of Matthew*, 17.

top table, on the top side, you will see the events and teaching of the Old Testament. Then if you look under the glass table top, you will see the face of Jesus because all of the Old Testament points to Him.³

Friends, it's important for us to understand these two types of prophecies. They help us make links between the Old and New Testaments. However, *pattern fulfillments* are like gospel glasses we put on that help us see the redemptive narrative running through all of Scripture, and Matthew's Gospel is full of pattern fulfillments.

In vv. 13-23, we will see three patterns of fulfillments. Therefore, I have three points to help us walk through the text.

I. The True Son of God gives True Deliverance to His people (vv. 13-15)

In these three verses, Matthew sees the fulfillment of Hosea 11:1. Let's re-read vv. 13-15:

After they were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For Herod is about to search for the child to kill him." ¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called my Son.

Now let's hear what Hosea 11:1 says:

*When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.*

Remember, this text is not a prophecy in an exact sense. It is a redemptive pattern that points to Jesus. Hosea was not thinking of the Messiah when he wrote this text—but the Holy Spirit was. The Holy Spirit brought to Matthew's mind this text and helped him understand that it was talking about Jesus. As a result, Matthew helps us see the Christ-centeredness of the Old Testament.

So, let's go back to Hosea 11 because this text is not prophesying about the Messiah. Rather it is about Israel, whom God considered His son and His deliverance of them from Egypt. So, when Hosea wrote v. 1, *he was actually looking back* at the Exodus event when Moses led God's people out of Egypt.

Matthew wants us to see that in Jesus, the old Mosaic exodus is repeated but in a new and better way. Jesus is like Moses, only infinitely better. Also, he wants us to see that Jesus is the ultimate embodiment of Israel as God's Son. *This makes Jesus the True Son of God.* The late pastor and scholar John Stott says:

As Israel was oppressed in Egypt under the despotic rule of Pharaoh, so the infant Jesus became a refugee in Egypt under the despotic rule of Herod. As Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, so Jesus passed through the waters of John's baptism in the River Jordan. As Israel was tested in the wilderness of Zin for forty years, so Jesus was tested in the wilderness of Judea for forty days. And as Moses from Mount Sinai gave Israel the law, so Jesus from the Mount . . . gave his disciples the true interpretation and amplification of the law.⁴

In Hosea and Matthew 2:13-15, we see a pattern of the unfolding work of redemption in Jesus. So, as Jesus goes down to Egypt, JESUS' story is THAT story BUT in its ultimate fulfillment. Then when God calls His Son out of Egypt, JESUS' story is THAT story BUT in its ultimate fulfillment.

Let's come back to Hosea 11 because it is not only about the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. Ultimately, it is also about God's faithfulness to His rebellious people.

Think about it this way, if we take the main point of God was faithfulness to His rebellious son, Israel, and we lay it over Matthew 2:13-15 what we learn is how much more He will be faithful to us through Jesus, who is the obedient Son. Jesus is the Son in whom God said He is well pleased.

³ O'Donnell, 52.

⁴ John Stott, *Through the Bible, Through the Year*, 154.

Think about it this way. Perhaps you are here, and you are not a Christian, but you want to be. You might be wondering how God could love you. You may even have a hard time believing that. I mean, you understand you are a sinner, but you have a hard time believing God loves you and will save you. You may believe you are beyond saving. You may think you have gone too far. You want Jesus, but you believe your sins have made such a separation between you and God that nothing and no one can help.

Or perhaps you are a Christian; you know you're a sinner, and yet you still struggle with your sin. I mean, you love Jesus, and you keep repenting of your sin, but you know how many times you have failed. You feel ashamed. It feels like you keep starting over and over and over, but it feels like you can never get on track. You want to please God, but you just keep messing it up. Sometimes even Christians feel separated from God by their sin, and they have a hard time believing Jesus loves them.

The Apostle Paul struggled with that. He said as much at the end of Romans 7. Then at the end of Romans 8, in vv. 38-39, he says:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Friends, our sin may have exiled us from God, but Jesus is our Deliverer. He is the Faithful Son of God. His exile was your exile. He took your sin so that you could be forgiven. His death on the cross is our death. He paid our debt and delivered us from the wrath of God. There is, therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The question is: *Are you in Him? If you are struggling with this or want to talk to someone about your relationship with Jesus, please talk to me at the end of the service.*

II. The True Son of God gives True Hope to His people (vv. 16-18)

The second event Matthew wants us to consider is the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem. We touched on it last Sunday. If you remember, we learned that Herod was a ruthless king. Killing all of the baby boys two-years-old and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding region is really not out of character for Herod. He carried out many political murders, so the extermination of baby boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem most likely did not get any attention—except to God.⁵ The slaughter of these babies was a horrific tragedy, and yet the grief and pain found here are folded into the redemption of God's people. Look in vv. 16-18:

Then Herod, when he realized that he had been outwitted by the wise men, flew into a rage. He gave orders to massacre all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, in keeping with the time he had learned from the wise men.¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:¹⁸ A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.

This prophecy comes from Jeremiah 31:15. The question is: *How does this prophecy connect to Jesus?*

When Jeremiah speaks of Rachel, he is referring to Jacob's favorite wife. She was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and she died giving birth to Benjamin. Because she died in this way, she took on a symbolic role for Israel. She became known as "*the mater dolorosa*" or "*the sorrowful mother*." Because of this title, she was considered *the mother of Israel for all time*.⁶

When Rachel died, she was buried in the vicinity of Ramah. Ramah was located about five miles northeast of Jerusalem. Bethlehem, on the other hand, was about five miles south. So, what's the connection between Bethlehem and Ramah?

So, when Judah was carried into Babylonian exile in 587 BC, the people were marched through Ramah. When Jeremiah gave his prophecy, he envisioned Rachel, *the mother of Israel*, alive and weeping for her children as they were marched into exile right before her eyes.

⁵ Craig Keener, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Matthew*, 72.

⁶ O'Donnell, 54.

In addition to this grief, when the people were carried to Babylon, it ended the rule of the Davidic line of kings. The pain was just too much to bear. It seemed God had abandoned His people. It seemed that He had abandoned His covenant with them because they had lost the Promised Land and the line of the Promised King. In other words, all hope was lost!

However, when you read Jeremiah 31, it is not the Weeping Prophet's normal prophecy. Jeremiah 31 is actually about hope! Listen to Jeremiah 31:15-17:

*This is what the Lord says:
A voice was heard in Ramah,
a lament with bitter weeping—
Rachel weeping for her children,
refusing to be comforted for her children
because they are no more.
¹⁶ This is what the Lord says:
Keep your voice from weeping
and your eyes from tears,
for the reward for your work will come—
this is the Lord's declaration—
and your children will return from the enemy's land.
¹⁷ There is hope for your future—
this is the Lord's declaration—
and your children will return to their own territory.*

In v. 15, Jeremiah sees the coming exile, and Rachel weeping for his children but in vv. 16-17, he sees the return and redemption of God's people. Matthew picks up on the climax of Rachel's tears in the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem. Rachel is still weeping for her children.

However, in this pain and grief is hope! The birth of Jesus means the King has returned, and the exile is finally over. Yes, there is pain and grief, but there is hope for the end of this suffering. The Ultimate King in the line of David has returned, and He will establish a New Covenant with God's people. He will restore His people.

Jeremiah writes in vv. 31-34:

"Look, the days are coming"—this is the Lord's declaration—"when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³² This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master"—the Lord's declaration. ³³ "Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days"—the Lord's declaration. "I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them"—this is the Lord's declaration. "For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.

In Jesus, the King in the line of David has come to inaugurate a New Covenant with His people. *The True Son of God* has arrived, and the exile of God's people is over.

Friends, it is true that, in one sense, we are strangers and aliens in this world. We are sojourners traveling to our heavenly home. Often, we may feel exiled by the world and its culture. We just don't seem to fit. Unfortunately, this is the normal Christian experience. We must remember that the exile is over, for hope is in the True Son of God.

Some of our brothers and sisters in Christ are even killed for their faith in Jesus. The pain and suffering for being connected to Jesus are still inflicted on God's children today. Herod's rage at God's people has not stopped, for it is found in many others around the world who believe they can stamp out God's children.

What we must remember is that in Christ, we are never exiled and never separated from God, no matter what our suffering may be. I want to come back to Romans 8 again, and this time read vv. 35-37:

Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: Because of you we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that God's people may be persecuted and put to death all day long. It may seem like they have lost it all and God has abandoned them, but He has not. For in Christ, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us on the cross. In Jesus, the King has returned, and He is our Conquering King. He is our hope in our pain and suffering. One day the healing hand of the King will wipe away every tear.

III. The True Son of God gives True Salvation to the Nations (vv. 19-23)

Look in vv. 19-23, for this, is the most difficult of these three prophecies to understand. This prophecy is a pattern that is a prophetic allusion. Listen to vv. 19-23 again:

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, because those who intended to kill the child are dead." ²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother, and entered the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. ²³ Then he went and settled in a town called Nazareth to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Here we learn that God was continuing to lead Joseph by sending an angel to him in a dream. He told him to take his family back to Israel but not to Bethlehem. Instead, he was to live in Nazareth *so that what was spoken by the prophets would be fulfilled so that Jesus would be known as a Nazarene.*

If you have ever studied this verse, you may have recognized that nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that Jesus would be called a Nazarene. Some people think it is referring to a Nazarite, but that is incorrect. Jesus never took Nazarite vows. As a matter of fact, He didn't live anything like a Nazarite.

So, what does Matthew mean when he says Jesus would be known as a Nazarene? I think Matthew is bringing together two prophecies. The first one is in Isaiah 11:1, which is a very important Messianic text. It reads:

*Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

The Hebrew word for *branch* is *neser*. Historians believe the town of Nazareth was founded by decedents of king David's line when they returned from Babylon. Their line was no longer in power, so they settled a new village away from Jerusalem and named it Nazareth or, in Hebrew, *neser-eth* (The city of the *Branch*).

Nazareth was settled by people who longed for the Messiah's arrival. Nazareth was a tribute to the coming Messiah.

The second prophecy that helps us understand Jesus being called a Nazarene is what happened to the town over time. Over time, the region of Galilee became mixed with Gentiles and Jews. This was why Matthew referred to that region as "*Galilee of the Nations*," with Nazareth being right in the middle.

Because it was a mixed town, it was looked down upon by the rest of Israel. To be from Nazareth was not a good thing. That was why when Nathaniel learned Jesus was from Nazareth, he responded, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" You were despised if you were from Nazareth.

So, the prophecy of Jesus being a Nazarene has a double meaning. First, *it means that He is the long-awaited Branch of David*. The tree was cut down, and only a stump remained, but from that stump grew a shoot in the Royal line of David. Second, because Jesus was from Nazareth and was known as a Nazarene, he grew up in a backwater, despised village mixed with Jews and Gentiles. This contributed to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:3, which said He would be despised and rejected and rejected by men.

Our Messiah is God! He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! And, yet, He is our humble Savior who, though being God, laid it aside and took on the form of a Servant. Jesus went to the cross bearing our sin and sorrow. He gave His life as

our Substitute on the cross. He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. Now Jesus fulfills Isaiah 11:10, which says:

On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will look to him for guidance, and his resting place will be glorious.

Jesus is the Root and Branch of David! He is the Banner for the nations and calls all to come to Him and trust in Him as the One who died in their place and for their sin.

Conclusion: As we come to the end of Matthew 2, we learn that there are a couple of things at work. First, Matthew looked back at the redemptive patterns in the Old Testament and saw Jesus, the True Son of God. He wants us to know Him.

However, the Apostle John has a perspective too. In Revelation 12, he looks back at Jesus' birth, and he sees that there is a cosmic battle raging. Then, Revelation 12:4 says that Satan, the serpent/dragon, wanted to kill the child, but he could not. The Lord protected the child, for the child is the King who must shepherd the nations with a rod of iron. With the arrival of King Jesus, Satan's doom is assured, and he knows it. He knows he can't win, so he turns his war with Jesus to God's children. Revelation 12:17 says:

So the dragon was furious with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep the commands of God and hold firmly to the testimony about Jesus.