

The King Fulfills Prophecy, Part 2

Matthew 2:16-23

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Take your Bible and let's look at Matthew chapter 2. Matthew chapter 2. And we're examining verses 13-23 in our continuing study of the Book of Matthew. And I know many of you have really been blessed already as we've shared. Let me back up and get a running start at this text. The central theme of all Old Testament prophecy is the coming king. The coming king who will rule in God's promised kingdom.

If there is one major emphasis of all Old Testament prophecy, it is that God is going to set up his rule, God is going to have a kingdom like no other kingdom has ever been, and there will be a very special individual who will be the king in that kingdom. And that individual, of course, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

That's the theme of Old Testament prophecy. Over and over again the Old Testament promises that there is one who is to come, one who has the character, one who has the wisdom, one who has the power needed to bruise the usurper's head, as it says in Genesis 3:15, one who is capable of taking back man's lost dominion and setting up the kingdom of God on earth and throughout eternity. And this one, this specially anointed one, the Messiah, the Anointed, the king. That is the message of the Old Testament prophets.

In fact, as I noted last time for you there are probably 332 specific prophecies fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, so that every facet of his life is covered in the Old Testament prophecies. And the prophets, of course, according to 1 Peter chapter 1 – you might look at it for a moment – as they wrote these things really didn't understand the full import. They knew they were writing of one who would come, but they weren't sure just exactly all the details.

And so in 1 Peter 1:9, it talks about "the salvation of our souls, of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you:" In other words, even though they prophesied this saving king, they looked into their prophecies to gain a full understanding of what it was that they meant by what they said.

Verse 11. "Searching what person, - " literally " - or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." They were given prophecies but they looked at them and they searched them out to try to understand who and when would fulfill these tremendous prophecies. So the Old Testament presents to us a king, and not just a king, but a human king. And not just a human king, but a divine king, Jehovah God, king incarnate.

And the wonder of the New Testament and the wonder of the Gospels, in particular, Matthew, Mark,

Luke, and John, is that they called together the answer to many of these prophecies and they focused them right on the person of Jesus Christ like some divine spotlight, and he becomes the only one who can fulfill these prophecies. All the imposters are unmasked by their inability to fit the picture and Jesus Christ is solidified as the one who was prophesied because in every part he fits what the prophets said.

From Matthew, which begins the New Testament, from the very first chapter of Matthew, from the very first verse of Matthew, the royal genealogy of the king is presented. All the way through the Revelation, and when you get to the book of Revelation, it ends with the king of kings reigning in his glory. The New Testament from the beginning of Matthew to the end of revelation is intended to present to us the one who fulfilled the predictions of the king, the one who is the king.

The term, for example, the term for kingdom in the New Testament is the Greek word *basileia*. The term for kingdom is used 144 times in the New Testament to speak of the reign of Jesus Christ. The reign of Jehovah God. One hundred and forty-four times it talks about his kingdom. The term for king, *basileus*, in a form of the term for kingdom, obviously, is used 115 times in the New Testament and at least 35 of those times in direct reference to Jesus Christ.

And the verb form, *basileuō*, a verb meaning “to reign” is used in reference to Christ ten times. One hundred and eighty-nine times at least in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is associated with the kingdom that God promised in the prophets that he would bring. And that is a great and vast use of terminology for the New Testament and it helps us to see that the New Testament is indeed emphasizing the fact that he is a king.

And the whole reason for Matthew 1 and 2 is to vindicate those very words of Jesus that I am a king. To this end was I born. And they, at least of the Jewish people should well have known by the events of his birth that, in fact, he was a king. Even from the beginning, it was evident. It was evident in his genealogy in chapter 1. It was evident in the virgin birth, which bypassed the curse. It was evident in the adoration of the Persian kingmakers, who saw him as the monarch that he was. It was evident in the antagonism of Herod, who as a king would only have been threatened by another king, and thus back door, backhandedly does Herod acknowledge Jesus as king by his fear of him taking his own throne.

The first two chapters of Matthew are to solidify that he was born a king. Now the final way in which Matthew does this is by drawing out of the prophetic word, drawing out of the Old Testament age, four prophecies that point to the king and showing how Christ fulfills each one. The king fulfills prophecy. Four prophecies showing that Jesus is the king. Four drawn from the past that are fulfilled in him.

And they are most interesting. They are connected each one with a geographical location. Bethlehem, Egypt, Ramah, and Nazareth. They are a literary unit appearing in the second chapter. There is a method to what Matthew was saying here as he pulls these four prophecies together. And it's always been amazing to me as I've studied these four how that it would be impossible humanly speaking for a person's birth to have involved Bethlehem, Egypt, Ramah, and Nazareth.

I mean, that in itself, a person is born in one spot and that's usually it. But to have rotated to four different locations in significance, or to have had at least significant events in four places, all

attendant to your birth, compounds the situation so that chance is eliminated. "Whoever it is that can fulfill these four," Matthew is saying, "is worthy to be crowned the king." Prophecy tells us he is a king.

Now last time we discussed number one, and the first one was in verses 2:4-6, the birth at Bethlehem. And in 2:4, Herod "gathered the chief priests, the scribes, demanded of them where the Christ should be born. They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,' "

And then Matthew adds what the prophet said with some of his own words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and says, "And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall shepherd my people Israel."

The first prophecy was that of Micah 5:2, that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. That was the first one that should have pointed them to the fact that this was the king. The second one we saw in verses 13-15, didn't we? And we called it the exodus to Egypt. The birth in Bethlehem, the exodus to Egypt. And you remember what happened "when they were departed, - " verse 13 " - behold, the angel of the Lord - " that is after the wise men had departed, being warned by God, the angel " - appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.' When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, - " and that was Hosea chapter 11:1 " - saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."

And so Christ fulfills the second element. He was called out of Egypt, as well as born at Bethlehem. And we saw the beautiful typology in comparing Israel as God's son in Hosea with the Lord Jesus Christ as God's son in Matthew.

Now that brings us to the third prophecy and where we want to start for our study tonight and we're calling that the ravaging of Ramah. The ravaging of Ramah. The birth at Bethlehem, the exodus from Egypt, the ravaging of Ramah. Verses 16-18. This is not an easy passage to relate to the prophecy, so I want you to think clearly with me as we go.

Now remember, Jesus was born in, no doubt, a stable, a cave in the side of a hill in Bethlehem. By the time the wise men arrived, he had grown to be several months old. They fled into Egypt and stayed there for some months, and then the angel told them they could go back. In all probability, after Herod was dead, there would be very little time wasted and they would begin to move back.

But that was not yet to be because something is here in an interlude. Before their return, we go back to the land of Israel, and this is what we find happening, verse 16. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men,-" and by the way, the word "mocked" *empaizō* in the Greek, means to "mock" usually, but because of a use of it in the Septuagint in Jeremiah 15:10, it is used there to trick.

It also has the implication of tricking somebody, not just mocking, but mocking them by trickery. And that is what Herod assumed that the magi had done to him. They had tricked him by going back another way.

And so “when he saw that he was mocked - ” or tricked “ - by the wise men, - ” the magi “ - was exceeding angry, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”

Now you’ll remember earlier in the narrative, in verse 7, Herod had inquired diligently of the wise men at what time the Christ was born, what time the king was born. Not because he wanted the information to validate the king, but because he wanted to kill the king and he wanted to determine the age. And so he asked that question. And here it tells us that when he found that information out, he set about “to kill all the children from two years old and under,” because that was within the time range that the wise men had told it.

Now let’s look at verse 16 and just take it a little at a time and help you to understand. Herod, of course, by this time, if you’ve been with us you know what a horrible, cruel, unbelievable man he was, slaughtering people all through his reign as an Edomite king of Israel. But here it says he was tricked by the wise men and he became exceedingly angry.

This is the Greek word *thumoō* it’s a very strong word. It literally means “violent rage.” Violent rage. He literally went into a rage. He became enraged. Interesting, I think, if I recall correctly it’s a passive form. In other words, he was out of control. He was not voluntarily doing it. It was being done to him. He was way out of control with his anger.

And it actually blinded his sense. I mean, if he had any sense at all, he would have figured this. He would have said, “Well, if the wise men, the magi were smart enough not to come back, they were probably also smart enough to have warned the family that had the baby, right? And the family that had the baby would have fled. If he’d have used his head, he would have thought along those lines. If they tricked me, they certainly would have warned that family. If they mocked me, they certainly would have taken care of that.

But as rage blinds him and he doesn’t even think about that, and he orders the massacre of every baby boy in the area. And he sent his soldiers in to murder them all. And no doubt you can imagine the bands of soldiers going from house to house and chasing fleeing mothers who clutched to their breasts their little ones and seeing the soldiers then rip the baby out of the mothers’ arms, and with their sword pierce its heart until it was dead. That’s what went on in Bethlehem because of the rage of this man.

Now it says not only Bethlehem, but in all its borders, surrounding areas. And you’ll note also that from two years old and under. It’s most interesting to me that Herod never bothered with whether this was the true king. It could have well been the true king if he’d have thought about it. He probably, he may have even thought it was because the prophets had said he’d be born in Bethlehem, and I really believe that he realized in his mind this is probably the real thing and I got to get rid of him. So he set about to execute the real king of Israel, the real Messiah king.

And so he slew, it says, all two years old and under. That’s interesting why he did that because I’m convinced that the baby would not be much – well, maybe at the most about six months old at this time. Why would he extend it to two years? Some commentators believe that any baby that had

passed its first birthday would be constituted a two-year-old. But when a baby became 13 months old, it was thought of as two-year-old. It was working in its second year. And so that he was really just bringing it all down to that level.

Others say, no, it means two years old and what he was trying to do is make sure in case the magi were wrong or miscalculated or maybe in case they tried to trick him a little bit themselves the first time through, he was going to get everybody who was with, in any sense, or in any way, in proximity. And so he went all the way to two years. Whatever it was, he felt in his mind that if he slaughtered all the baby boys under two years, he'd get the one that he wanted to get.

Well, we don't need to talk about how wicked it is. It's obvious. It's inconceivable that a man would do this. More inconceivable when you realize that he probably felt this was the Christ, this was the Messiah, this was the king. What an evil, vile, incredibly heinous crime. And the wicked deed, of course, was what I think we might call the beginning of sorrows for Israel as they reject their king. This was just the beginning. I feel Matthew wants us to see that as the very beginning of a Messiah's life takes place, there is rejection that results in death, right from the start, unbelief, wickedness, calamity, tragedy.

And by the way, beloved, if you think that slaughter at Bethlehem was something, listen. That was absolutely nothing. That was nothing compared to the disaster that came in 70 AD, when 1,100,000 Jews were slaughtered by the armies of Titus. This was just the beginning.

And I'll tell you something else. Those two things are nothing compared to what will happen in the great tribulation when the false messiah, a greater far than Herod ever dreamed of being, will come and shed far more of Israel's blood than has ever been shed. This was just the beginning. Just the start.

You say, "Well, why is this included here?" Because it fulfilled prophecy. Look at verse 17. In the death of those babies, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'" That is, they no longer exist. They're dead. They're gone.

Now I want you to stick with me on this so that you'll understand it. Matthew says this was done to fulfill prophecy. This is the only one of the Gospels that refers to this incident, and that's interesting. But it fits Matthew's theme of fulfilled prophecy at the birth of Christ to establish that he was the king.

Now what were the circumstances under which this prophecy was uttered? And for that you must turn to Jeremiah 31:15. And this is fascinating. Jeremiah 31:15. And we've already learned in the first two prophecies that sometimes New Testament writers really surprise us by the way they use the Old Testament.

Sometimes we just don't understand that kind of use and we have to broaden our thinking a little. And I want you to see what happens here. The prophecy is in Jeremiah 31:15 and what's interesting about it is it doesn't appear here to be a prophecy. It is a prophecy – now watch – because Matthew said it was, not because it's inherent in this text.

Jeremiah 31:15. “Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *are* not.” Now there is the text. There is the prophecy. Now let’s talk about the setting so we’ll understand it and how it applies.

The prophesying of Jeremiah was maybe the most tragic prophesying of all in Israel’s history, because he uttered the doom of a dying nation. His was kind of like the swan song and he uttered it with tears. And he knew that nobody would listen and nobody would repent and the captivity was really inevitable. And so Jeremiah pronounced doom.

And later on, there was coming one greater than Jeremiah who again would utter the same doom for the same nation, and he would also do it with tears. One day he sat over Jerusalem and the Bible says that he said, “Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft I would have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood, but you would not. Thou that killest the prophets stonest them that are sent unto you.”

And the Bible tells us that he wept. And so Jeremiah sits in view of a people that are doomed and weeps. And Jesus sits in views of people that are doomed and weeps. Now – stay with me and we’ll see how this all comes together. Don’t leave me now. Even in Jeremiah’s prophecy, there is a great hope, believe it or not.

In fact, this is most interesting. From Jeremiah chapter 30 to Jeremiah chapter 35 – or rather 33 – 30 to 33, there are 4 chapters in the heart of this book that are filled with hope and joy and comfort. Jeremiah is talking about doom and the Babylonian captivity came not long after and took them all away, and it was a terrible tragedy. But in the middle of this doom, there is great comfort and great hope in chapters 30 to 33.

So notice this. This statement about weeping, and lamentation, and the children, and all of that, is right in the middle of the hope, right in the middle of the comfort, right in the middle of the joy section. Why? Because even though there’s weeping and even though there’s lamentation, and even though there’s crying, these chapters look ahead to the coming Messiah. These chapters look ahead to the coming Messiah. These chapters look ahead to one who is going to come and make it right. There’s going to be a change.

In fact, look at Jeremiah 31:16, the very next verse to the prophecy. “Thus saith the Lord; ‘Restrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded,’ saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. ‘And there is hope in thine end,’ saith the Lord, ‘that thy children shall come again to their own border.’ ”

In other words, God says to Jeremiah, “It’s a sad day, and there’s doom and you have a right to weep, but refrain from weeping any longer because I’ll redeem them back.” And he did, didn’t he, 70 years later, 70 years later. And the same thing is true in the use of the prophecy by Matthew. There was weeping. There was Rachel weeping for her children. There was wailing. There was lamentation.

Because of the tragedy, the destruction, the doom, that came on a nation that rejected its Messiah. But at the same time, there was hope because even then there was a remnant and one day,

according to Romans 11, God is going to regather that whole nation, isn't he? And he's going to bring them back and they're going to see their Messiah.

And as Zachariah says, "They're going to look upon him whom they have pierced and they're going to mourn for him as an only son and there's going to be salvation again in the nation of Israel." And Paul says, "So all Israel shall be saved." So you can see then that there's a general parallel, and that's all I'm talking about now. There's a general parallel.

Jeremiah spoke about doom. And the people of Israel wept about the doom, but Jeremiah said, "Don't keep weeping because it's going to turn around. It's going to be salvation." And the same thing is true of Christ. When Christ came there was weeping because rejection brought doom. But don't continue to weep because that will all be turned around and there will be salvation for Israel. That's the parallel.

There was weeping. When the captivity came and the people were scattered, there was weeping. When the deaths in Jerusalem came at the very beginning a sign of the hateful, vengeful rejection of Herod and a sign of the indifferent rejection of the chief priests and the scribes and the people that there was going to be a price to pay.

But the Word of the Lord is the justice. There should have been hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jeremiah's time. There should be hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jesus' time because there was going to be a turnaround. There's still hope. There's still salvation.

Now, we notice that this whole concept is connected to Ramah and Rachel. And that's the issue. Look back with me now at Matthew and let's discuss this. Ramah and Rachel. Now this is fascinating. What does Ramah have to do with it and what does Rachel have to do with it?

Let's talk about Ramah. Ramah was a city – now notice – five miles north of Jerusalem. Okay? Five – not really a city, more like a village. Now I want you to notice something. Watch. In Israel, there were two kingdoms: The northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. Okay? The borderline – now watch this – the borderline between the two crossed right at Ramah. Okay? Now Ramah was the border city between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. You can check that out in 1 Kings 15:17. It was located five miles north of Jerusalem.

Now Ramah was the place where foreign conquerors ordered the defeated multitude to be assembled for deportation to faraway places. When the conquerors came in to deport the Children of Israel in the captivity, Ramah was the deportation town. And because of its location it became symbolic of the north and the south, both kingdoms.

It was sort of like Ramah was the only place where Israel came together. Ramah sort of touched both. Ramah was always associated with weeping because it was at Ramah that the deportation into captivity took place. And so Ramah was a place of weeping.

Now why is Jeremiah talking about Rachel? Well, Jeremiah is really drawing a picture. It isn't that Rachel really went to Ramah, necessarily, and wept. Rachel is a symbol of the mothers of Israel. And Ramah is a symbol of the deportation of the sons and daughters of Israel. And the mothers of Israel are crying because they see their children taken away. That's the idea.

And most interesting, Rachel was Jacob's most cherished wife. And Rachel had given birth to Joseph. And Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. And they represent the northern kingdom. In fact, the northern kingdom is often called "Ephraim." So the northern kingdom really, if we take that concept, is seen as Ephraim, was the son of Joseph who was the son of Rachel. So that Rachel, from her womb, bore the northern kingdom. All right? She bore the northern kingdom.

Secondly, Rachel also bore Benjamin. Rachel also bore Benjamin. And Benjamin went to the south and is identified with the southern kingdom. And so what you see here is Rachel is a figure and Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31 sees it as if Rachel is alive and he sees Rachel standing at Ramah, and the northern kingdom is deported by Assyria into captivity. And the southern kingdom is deported by Babylon into captivity.

And both the north and the south have come from the loins of Rachel. And so Rachel is weeping as she sees both sides of her family taken into captivity. She is the symbol of the weeping mothers of the history of God's people as their sons and daughters are deported. She listens to their weeping and she herself begins to weep. She mourns bitterly.

First, she's deprived of Israel and Ephraim, and then of Judah and Benjamin. It was she, Rachel, who in Genesis 30:1 said, "Give me children or I die." It was she who of all mothers desperately wanted to be one. And now she stands, as it were, in the middle of those two nations by her seed in one and her seed in the other and sees them both taken into different captivities and it tears her up.

And so Jeremiah, by the symbol of Rachel standing at Ramah, says, "Israel is weeping because of the captivity of its children." When the population of the land was carried away it would have seemed as if God had deserted his children, Rachel's children, as if God had deserted his people.

But no sooner had Jeremiah presented the picture of Rachel weeping then he came right behind it and said, "Stop your weeping because there's coming a restoration." There is coming a salvation message. They're going to come back. And they did. And they did.

In fact, over in chapter 33, he even talks about the righteous branch, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be the agent to bring them back. And in the end the sorrow will be turned to joy in the salvation of the remnant fulfilled and the captivity and afterwards.

Now listen, Matthew - here's how Matthew comes in - Matthew shows us that the Holy Spirit also intended this imagery, this picture, to reveal the time of the birth of the Christ. And as Matthew sees the slaughter of Bethlehem's babies, it says, "If he sees Rachel beginning to weep all over again," and so he picks up this fantastic analogy of Jeremiah. And he sees Rachel weeping for her children. And why Rachel? Because Rachel was like the mother of Israel. And Rachel's tomb - mark it - was right outside the city of Bethlehem. It's even pointed out to you today as you take a taxi ride there.

And some Bible commentators tell us, most interesting, the word "Ramah" means "height." And any place in Israel that's a height is a ramah. And Bethlehem is a height. And some believe that Bethlehem in those days was referred to as Ramah. There were many Ramahs, incidentally, in Israel's history. Many places called "height."

And some believe that Rachel weeping at Ramah, as Matthew uses it is because of the proximity of Rachel's tomb to Bethlehem and because Bethlehem became known as a ramah, a height, a high place, so that that which Jeremiah used as a figure in his book was nothing more than a picture of what would happen again when the Messiah came.

So Rachel weeps again. And this time, she weeps not because Babylon or Assyria has destroyed her people, but because Herod has. Herod has. And this time it isn't because of some political foreign power. It's even the king of the very nation of Israel itself. The consolation follows immediately because even though the king has been exiled and the slaughter is going on, the king is going to come back, isn't he? From Egypt. And his gospel will be preached and a remnant will be saved.

So Rachel, you don't need to weep anymore. You can stop. The sorrow of the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem, babies murdered by Herod, sure, it was a sign of the coming doom. Sure, it was a sign of the terrible spiritual captivity of Israel that's still going on today. But in the end, there was a destiny and the destiny was blessing and salvation for the remnant who believe.

Those little babies, they didn't know it. Those precious little babies in Bethlehem at that time were the first casualties in the warfare waged between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdoms of his Christ. They were the first casualties. But ultimately, the victory would be won.

The babies surely, if I read my Bible right, the minute they died, went instantly into the presence of God who gathers the little ones in his arms and says, "Forbid them not for of such is the kingdom." And the mothers, they could stop weeping because this very one who was now exiled in Egypt would come back to offer them a salvation that could unite them with their own babies.

How interesting. The prophet gave us a picture. We didn't understand the picture. You see, beloved, all the Old Testament prophecy, we don't really understand. Some of it we have to wait until the New Testament cracks it open because remember this, the coming of Christ is over and over again called by the apostle Paul a what? Mystery. And it's hidden. And it is the New Testament writer under the magnificent and equal inspiration of the Holy Spirit who cracks open the mystery.

And we find that what Jeremiah was saying when he didn't even understand it, when he would have wanted to look into it and search it out and unfold it to his own mind, would never be able to until God sent along Matthew and inspired him with the Holy Spirit to give meaning and interpretation to that verse back there that enriched it in a magnificent way and applied it to Christ.

So the king, he has come to Bethlehem as Micah said. He has gone to Egypt as Hosea said. And he has caused weeping in Ramah by Rachel, the mothers of Israel, just as Jeremiah said. Finally, finally, in Matthew's magnificent presentation of pictures of the coming king from the prophets, he includes one more. The name of Nazareth.

Verse 19. "But when Herod was dead, - " and by the way, Josephus in his antiquities – I thought you might be interested in this – says he died of this: "Ulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot-filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath, and neither physicians nor warm baths led to recovery." I would say a rather fitting end for that kind of a man.

Matthew 2:19. “When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, - ” and you remember the angel told him to wait until he did. Verse 13. He said, “Now you go to Egypt. You stay there.” And I don't think it was very long after the family was there that he died. Now he was dead. The next move, the angel came and said the next place in fulfilling the prophetic word is Nazareth.

Verse 20. “Arise, take the young child and his mother, - ” and again, I point out every time you have the two together, the child comes first “ - go into the land of Israel: for they are dead who sought the young child's life.” Apparently, Herod wasn't the only one. There were some others involved, and the Lord had set them aside also. We don't have any word about that, but it's plural here. “You can go back now. They are dead.”

Verse 21. “He arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.” Now you'll note that there's no specific place. They just came back to Israel, undoubtedly coming from the direction of Egypt, they probably came up through the south and they would have come to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Perhaps in their own thinking, that would have been the place to stay.

After all, they knew the child was Emmanuel, God with us. They knew he was to be the Savior, Jesus, for he shall save his people was his name. They knew he was the Messiah of God. They knew this because God's angels had told them, and they probably thought Jerusalem was the place or maybe Bethlehem where he was born in proximity since he is the king, we better stick around. But that changed very fast.

Verse 22. And Joseph it says, “And when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there: - ” He was afraid to stay in the southern part, Jerusalem, Bethlehem area. And, in agreement with that, he was “ - warned of God in a dream, turned aside into the parts of Galilee.”

Now I want you to know why they were afraid. When Herod died, Herod had pretty well ruled everything. But when he died, the kingdom was spread around. A man named Herod Antipas took over the Galilee area up in the north. Archelaus took over the Judaea area.

Both of those, incidentally, were Herod's sons that weren't killed, obviously. They were less powerful than their father, and they weren't really kings. They were more like governors or territorial princes. And so there was Antipas in the Galilee area, the north. And then there was Archelaus in the south. And then when Joseph heard that Archelaus was in Judaea, he was afraid to settle there, and here's why.

While Herod was still alive, Archelaus had gained his reputation. Herod had decided that he wanted to take a huge, big, gold eagle - which was the symbol that the Romans liked – a huge golden eagle and erect it over the gate of the Jewish temple. Okay? Which didn't go over very big, to put it mildly. To the Jews, it was an abomination.

In fact, to them it was a violation of Exodus 20:4 because it was having other gods. And the reason they believed that is because the Romans – mark this – equated the eagle with Zeus and Jupiter. So the eagle represented one of their gods or two of their gods. And they were literally putting an idol over the temple.

Well, there were two famous Jewish teachers at this time by the name of Judas and Matthias, not to be confused with the Bible. Those are very common names. Judas and Matthias, these two famous Jewish teachers, experts in the law of God, got their students together and said, "Are you going to stand for this? Are you going to allow this? Are you going to let that guy put that eagle up there in the temple?" And he got the students all stirred up. And, of course, students are good for that. You get them all stirred up.

I always remember William Wilberforce's book called *Revolution for the Hell of it*, where he said some students came to him and asked him, and he said, "We've got a group that would like to revolt. Do you know a good cause?" Students sometimes can be like that. And so these students were stirred up and they had a good cause, really. They had their own nationalism, their own religion.

And so he stirred them up and they climbed the temple roof and they started to tear that eagle to pieces with their axes. They were up there chopping that thing to pieces. Well, they were arrested, brought to Herod. To avoid a wholesale insurrection, he sent them to Jericho for their trial. They received a mild punishment. The two teachers were executed.

Now, Herod died and at the following passover, a rebellion broke out in Jerusalem because of the murder of these two teachers. This is right after, just before the time when Jesus comes back from Egypt. This tremendous insurrection because of the murder of these two great teachers. And Archelaus, who was now in control, quelled the revolution by slaughtering 3,000 Jews. He just lined them up and slaughtered them. Most of them – well, not most of them – many of them were pilgrims attending the passover. So it was an incredible time when Israel's religious consciousness was so high to move in and just create bloodshed and slaughter 3,000.

So they hated the man and they feared this Archelaus. In fact, he was so rotten, he exceeded his father in being rotten, like some of those Old Testament kings. The Romans even removed him. And you know, one of the guys they replaced him with was a man named Pontius Pilate.

Now that's why Joseph had second thoughts about going to Judaea, and his thoughts were confirmed because he was "warned of God –" verse 22 says " – in a dream and turned aside to the parts of Galilee." The angel said, "Go to Galilee." Then verse 23. Here's the reason. "He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.' "

Now here's the fourth element in the prophecies surrounding his birth to show he was born a king. He was to go back to Nazareth. By the way, this was Joseph and Mary's original home, wasn't it? According to Luke 2:4, they were from Nazareth. They were to return to live out the prediction of the prophets who said he would be a Nazarene.

The term "Nazarene" - now watch this one – this statement " He shall be called a Nazarene" appears nowhere in the Old Testament, okay? Now look at it again. "to fulfill which was spoken by the prophets, - " plural " - 'He shall be called a Nazarene.' " Well, if you're looking for the prophets who said it, you won't find them in the Old Testament. You say, "What do you mean?" They're not there. We have no record of it in the Old Testament. We have no record of any prophet ever saying this.

Some people want to connect it up with Isaiah 11:1 where it talks about Christ being a branch *netser*, which is Hebrew, and they say *netser* and Nazareth - it's a bad connection. IT really doesn't make it for me. It's not good etymology. Besides, you've still got to deal with the prophets, plural, not just Isaiah 11:1. It seems so obscure to me that it would never be a connection.

Now Matthew says "the prophets." You say, "Well, how do you explain this?" Very simple. It's very simple to explain. The prophets said this. It just never got written in the Old Testament until now and it finally got written by Matthew. "Well," you say, "But he says the Old Testament prophets said it. Did they say some things that didn't get written down?" I hope this doesn't shake you up too much. Yes. By the way, there are plenty of things that were said very significantly that weren't written down in the Old Testament.

For example, Jude verse 14, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,' " Enoch said that. Want to know something? He didn't say it in the Old Testament. It isn't there. How do you know he said it? Because Jude said he said it. How did Jude know? Because Jude was what? Inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

You know who said that he would be a Nazarene? The prophets said it. It just didn't get written down until here, but it did get written down here. But you want to know what's so beautiful? Matthew doesn't even give a bit explanation. He just says "the prophet said, He shall be called a Nazarene," which tells me that it must have been common knowledge that the people knew the prophet said that about the Messiah. That was common knowledge, I believe.

Our Lord, his birth, Bethlehem, exodus into Egypt, ravaging at Ramah, and a name of Nazareth. The place was so despised – now listen – the place was so despised that Nazareth and Nazarene became a synonym for somebody despised. When somebody said to you, "Oh, you Nazarene," that was a term of derision. In fact, when the early church was started, they used to say that to the Christians as a kind of a knock, kind of a joke.

In Acts 24:5, "we have found this man - " they say, Paul " - a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and he is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:" It's used in derision. And I think that's part of the reason the prophecy is here. Beloved, the Old Testament said again and again about Jesus he would be despised. He would be despised. He would be despised. He would be rejected. He would be hated. He would be looked down upon.

That's what Psalm 22 says. That's what Psalm 69 says. That's what Isaiah 49 says. That's what Isaiah 53 says. That's what Daniel 9:26 says. The Talmud, the Jewish rabbinic writings, calls Jesus, Yeshu Ha-Notzri, which means "the Nazarene." They never call him the Bethlehemite, never, even though he was born in there. They never call him that. They call him the Nazarene, because that's derisive.

Jerome reports the synagogue prayer in which Christians are cursed as Nazarenes. They say, "May they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the just, these Nazarenes." If Jesus had been raised in Bethlehem, if he had been raised in Jerusalem, he would not have been despised in the same way. But God said he would be despised, and being from Nazareth just intensified that. It was to be Nazareth. Nazareth would furnish him with the name "Jesus the Nazarene" and that

would furnish him with a title of reproach which God predicted would come. He was despised, rejected, and finally killed. The Nazarene.

You see, every single location, vital to the character of Jesus Christ, Matthew paints a masterpiece of a picture. Micah, he said the king would come to Bethlehem, and to Bethlehem he came. Hosea, the king would come through Egypt. Through Egypt he came. Jeremiah, there would be weeping like Rachel in Ramah of old and the picture of Jeremiah and their was, as the mothers wept over the babies beside the tomb of Rachel in the Ramah of Bethlehem. And the prophets of old said his name would be Nazarene, and he would be from Nazareth. And so it was.

And at each point he fulfills a prophecy that solidifies his right to reign. And so says Matthew. This is the king. By genealogy, by birth, by worship, by the jealousy of hatred, and by the fulfillment of prophecy, this man was born a king. For this cause came he into the world. Let's pray.

Father, we know that the majesty of Jesus is not a painted majesty. It's not a gilded dominion. It's not a comet like blaze of transient splendor. It's an eternal monarchy. Jesus reigns and shall reign forever and ever. Not by the force of his army, not by the multitude of his soldiers, not by the grandeur of his earthly state, but by virtue of who he is. And Father, we realize that nothing can hinder him putting on his head crown after crown in comparison to all the other petty monarchs who have come and gone.

We see in the story, Lord, three reactions. Reaction of those who were indifferent, who ignored it all. The chief priests and the scribes. The reaction of Herod and those who resented and hated, wanted this child dead, the antagonists, and the reaction of the wise, the magi, who worshiped.

And we know that what Matthew is calling for Israel to do, as he wrote many years ago, and what he is calling for men down through the corridors of history to do is to acknowledge Jesus as king, not to be resentful and not to be indifferent.

And so, Father, we pray that we may see him again as king of kings and Lord of Lords and that we may bow our lives at his feet and worship him. We pray in his wonderful and glorious name. Amen.

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