Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Birth Fulfills Prophecy
Scripture: Matthew 2
Code: 80-163

As we have the wonderful joy of thinking on the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ this morning I want you to turn in your Bible back to Matthew Chapter 2. There are of course many messages preached on Christmas, many books written, many songs written but it is infrequent that attention is directed to some of the most fascinating details around the birth of Christ that are included in this second chapter of Matthew. By the time we get to Matthew chapter 2 the birth of Christ is over.

The event itself has taken place and we are involved in what follows but this chapter is a remarkable chapter for a number of reasons. It is at first reading rather simple to understand and yet at a deeper reading extremely complex and somewhat challenging even to interpret. But the heart and soul of the second chapter of Matthew is to tell us that Jesus in the events around his birth fulfilled Old Testament prophesy.

Now that is very important for us to understand. The prophet Isaiah said that Jesus would be born of a virgin and he was. The prophet said it at least 600 years before Jesus was born. The prophet Micah said Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and he was. The prophet Hosea said that he would be called out of Egypt and he was. Many prophets said he would be from Nazareth and he was. Matthew assembles those specific prophesies starting at the end of chapter 1 and going through chapter 2 in order that he might strengthen his argument that this child is indeed the promised King.

In chapter 1 Matthew pointed out that the Child had the credentials of the King, that is he was born of the seed of Abraham and of the line of David, the royal line. That's why the genealogy of Jesus is given in Matthew 1 so that we might understand that the one that was to be the promised son of David, the King of the Davidicline, the King of Israel and the King of Kings and the King over an eternal kingdom was indeed Jesus Christ because he was in fact in the royal line. Then having established that this one is the promised king by virtue of His lineage Matthew then turns to the virgin birth and establishes that this one is indeed the promised King by virtue of his virgin birth. That is He had no earthly father. This is the God man because that which was conceived in Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit and not by a man. It was the Holy Spirit who placed the seed in the egg of Mary that became the child that grew in her womb and was born Jesus, the Son of God.

So Matthew establishes His credentials by virtue of His lineage and by virtue of His virgin birth. Then Matthew further establishes the credentials of Jesus Christ as the promised King and the promised Messiah by seeing the fulfillment of prophesy. One very grand and exquisite and clear and precise

prophesy appears at the end of chapter 1 where after presenting the virgin birth Matthew quotes from Isaiah chapter 7:14, "Behold the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means God with us.

With that transition in the discussion of the credentials of being virgin born he moves to the next wave of credentials of the Messiah and that is that He fulfilled specific prophesy. The first of those prophesies, the very well-known one I just read, the prophesy of Isaiah 7 verse 14 that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. That is miraculous. No human being has ever been or will ever be born without a father, without a human source for the sperm that impregnates the egg. Only one person has ever been born with no contribution from a male and that is Jesus Christ, virgin born. He is man because he comes through Mary's womb. He is God because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. We know that prophesy and know it well. It was fulfilled 600 years after Isaiah prophesied it.

But that brings us into this whole realm of prophesy. As we come into chapter 2 the prophesies are quite remarkable and usually overlooked. They have to do with locations. The first prophesy that Jesus fulfills has to do with Bethlehem. The second prophesy that He fulfills has to do with Egypt. The third prophesy that He fulfills has to do with a place called Rama and the fourth prophesy that He fulfills has to do with a town called Nazareth. This is a complex of prophesies that cause us to be certain that the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, could not be somewhat coincidental. There are just too many prophetic components. It would have to be orchestrated by God and the fact that the birth of Christ was associated with Bethlehem as Micah said it would be, with Egypt as Hosea said it would be, with Rama as Jeremiah said it would be and with Nazareth as many prophets said it would be is proof enough that this in fact is the prophesied, predicted Messiah.

Now as we look at these prophesies they challenge our thinking. They challenge our interpretive skills to understand them and grasp them but they affirm for us that this Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Messiah, the promised King and the Savior of the world. Let's begin with the first one, the birth at Bethlehem. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king behold Magi or wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem saying, "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews for we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him?" And when Herod the king heard it he was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people he began to inquire of them where the Christ was to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea for so it has been written by the prophet and you Bethlehem, land of Juda are by no means least among the leaders of Juda for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Now here is the first of these location elements in the birth of Christ. It comes from the prophet Micah and it says that he was to be born in Bethlehem. Now you all remember that the Magi were oriental king makers. They were the elite. They were the cultured. They were the leaders of the Middle Eastern society. They were the Persian king makers and philosophers and wise men and they had

been influenced by the Old Testament because you remember that the southern kingdom of Juda was taken into captivity into Babylon and with that southern captivity came the Old Testament and came the prophet Daniel and even the prophet Ezekiel who spent time in captivity as well. So they were exposed to the Old Testament prophesies regarding Messiah and that grew into an expectation that there would come this great king that the Old Testament promised. These wise men were watching and waiting for that event to happen. Then they were given a sign, a star in the heavens. They followed that and came of course to Jerusalem seeking this king. The whole of the Middle East was waiting for a great monarch who could rise up and rule that part of the world. Well, of course that possibility was an immense threat to Herod. Herod, though he had a measure of power was a small minded and threatened and insecure and wicked and evil man who upon hearing that a king of the Jews had been born would do everything possible to make sure that that king was executed in his infancy.

So the wise men came and they come and they approach Herod the king, after all he is the important man in Jerusalem and they are the important people from the land of Persia. They ask him, "Where is this king to be born? We have seen his star. We have come this far. We want to find him." Herod calls together the elite, the scribes, the chief priests of the people and begins to ask them where this is to happen and they respond that he is to be born in Bethlehem of Judea for thus it has been written by the prophet. That leads to the fulfillment of that prophesy as recorded in Micah 5:2.

Now what was Micah all about? Let's go back to Micah for a moment. This prophet, one of what is called the Minor Prophets, not because their message was minor but because their book is short, small. Micah's prophesy comes right after Jonah. Micah like most of the Minor Prophets had a message of judgement. Micah's message is a message of destruction. Destruction is going to come upon Israel, the northern kingdom. Destruction is going to come upon Juda, the southern kingdom. Remember after Solomon the kingdom was split into two parts, north and south, and Micah pronounces judgement on both. In his pronunciations of judgement he directs much of his assault on the leaders in those two nations.

Chapter 2 of Micah. "Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds. When morning comes they do it for it is int eh power of their hands." In other words they're powerful people who can pretty much do whatever they want so they spend all their dark hours planning to do evil. They covet fields and seize them and houses and take them away. They rob a man in his house, a man and his inheritance. These are the people who have the power. These are the rulers and the chiefs and the leaders who are usurping the rights of the rest of the people.

In verse 3, "Therefore thus says the Lord, behold I am planning against this family calamity from which you cannot remove your necks and you will not walk haughtily for it will be an evil time." I'm going to break your pride. I'm going to bring judgement on you because of your corrupt leadership.

Chapter 3 follows something of the same emphasis. "And I said, Hear now heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice?" In other words, shouldn't you be behaving in a way that is just? You're supposed to be executing justice as rulers. "You who hate good and love evil, who tear off their skin from them and their flesh from their bones and who eat the flesh of my people, strip off their skin from them, break their bones and chop them up as for the pot and as meat in a kettle." You treat the people as if they were stew meat. You hack them into bits as if to consume them. Not only were these leaders taking people's property but they were literally taking their lives. There is going to be judgement for such action.

Down in chapter 3 verse 9, again his talk is directed at leaders. "Hear this heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, who build Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with violent injustice. Her leaders pronounce judgement for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money yet they lean on the Lord saying, 'Is not the Lord in our midst?'

Calamity will not come upon us. Therefore on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins and the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest." He's going to destroy the land, the temple as well and the city of Jerusalem all because of corrupt leadership. So his message is a message that brings to the people the recognition again of how wretched their leadership is.

It's in that context that you come to chapter 5 verse 2. Here comes that prophesy regarding the ruler who is to be born in Bethlehem. "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though be little among the clans of Juda, from you will go forth for me to be a ruler in Israel, one whose goings forth are from long ago." In the midst of this terrible situation of corrupt leadership Micah says there will come a leader, a leader who will lead for God, for me, a leader who is just, a leader who is from eternity. This leader will come and he will come to Bethlehem, says Micah.

He's speaking of course of Messiah, the true ruler, the honorable king, the King of kings. So the message of Micah is a sad, weeping message and there is a sob in the nation for a true ruler and a true king and somebody who's fair and just and good and can save the people from their sins and from judgement. Micah says he will come and he will come to Bethlehem.

Now you can go back to Matthew chapter 2 and remind yourself that that is precisely what happened. "You Bethlehem, land of Juda, by no means least among the leaders of Juda for out of you shall come forth a ruler," and then Matthew adds this line, "Who will shepherd my people Israel." "Who will shepherd my people Israel." He says that the ruler will have the character of a shepherd, a gentle, pastoral, tender kind of ruler very much different than Herod who is known as the wolf, the absolute enemy of the sheep. So out of Bethlehem Jesus will come. Out of Bethlehem the Messiah will come.

Clearly that is what happened. The child was born in Bethlehem. Thus you have an explicit Old Testament prophesy that says the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem and he was.

The second prophesy that is of note in Matthew chapter 2 regards the exodus to Egypt. First the birth at Bethlehem, secondly the exodus to Egypt. This is a fascinating one. Go down to verse 13. "Now when they had departed," and that is speaking of the Magi or the wise men you remember the wise men came to Jerusalem and they asked Herod where is the king to be born, he got his chief priests and scribes and they quoted to him from the prophet and at that particular point the wise men went and the star showed them where in Bethlehem the child was to be born.

The wise men went into the house, they worshipped the child. They gave him frankincense and gold and myrrh as gifts. Gifts by the way fit for a king. At that particular point they would've gone back and told Herod where the child was because Herod told them you come back, you tell me so I can worship him but the Lord sent them a message and you remember how that message came. Verse 12, they were warned by God in a what - in a dream - not to return to Herod. They departed for their own country by another way.

Now in ancient times God spoke to people through dreams. They aren't dreams like your dreams and my dreams which are the unbridled meanderings of a mind that is basically shut off and uncontrolled. I don't want you to go home and say, "I thought I had a dream last night. I actually had a prophesy." No, you didn't. You had a dream, a meandering of your own unbridled mind when it's not under control.

That is not what we're talking about here. What it's saying here is that there are occasions in God's history where he has in a person's sleep made a direct revelation to that person of His will and purpose and even clearly instructed them with regard to some specific conduct and that's what happened here and not just in their case but as we will see in the case of Joseph and Mary who were also warned in a dream.

Let's pick it up in verse 13. "And when they had departed," that is the wise men now have gone back and Herod still doesn't know where the child is, "Behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Arise and take he child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him. And he arose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt and was there until the death of Herod."

Now why does he have to go to Egypt? Can't he just go north to Galilee or can't he go east across the Valley of the Jordan and up the mountains and over to the land of Edom or somewhere like that or can't he just go out into the wilderness somewhere of can't he go down to the coast and tuck away some where at Jappa or something like that? Why does he have to go to Egypt? That's a long trip.

It's 75 miles walk to get to the border and it's another 100 miles to get into the land of Egypt, to the heart of the land where some population resides and that's a journey of many, many days and Mary and Joseph have a very young child that the note that they were in a house indicates that the child was not still in the manger, he's not still in his absolute infancy but somewhere between 1 and 2 years of age. That's why Herod slaughtered all the babies 2 and under. That's a long trek to make with a small child.

Why is it necessary? It tells you in verse 15. "In order that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son." Now here on the one had is a prophesy that has a very limited significance. It's only significant because it was prophesied. In other words there was nothing particularly important about going to Egypt in itself.

I might add there are some very, very weird and bizarre fabrications of the time that Jesus was in Egypt. They are lies. They are false documents. One of them is called the Gospel of the Infancy of our Lord. It's an old document and in it there are all kinds of fallacious statements. It's an interesting document to read. What it says is that when Jesus went to Egypt this is what happened: Idols shattered to pieces wherever he walked, a three year old child of an Egyptian priest who was possessed with demons put a swaddling cloth belonging to Jesus on his head and all the demons ran away, a woman with demons was healed by looking at Mary, robbers fled in terror at the sight of the child and all manner of diseases were healed wherever he went. That's not in the Biblical record and we know that to be a fallacious document.

We have no record of anything happening in Egypt. They went there and they stayed there for a prolonged period of time until Herod died. They went there, it says, explicitly in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Did they know that they were doing that? No, because the Scripture is very obscure. Here you have the quote of it, "Out of Egypt did I call my son." Makes a lot of sense there. The child goes to Egypt so that he can be called out of Egypt and fulfill the prophesy but if all you had was the prophesy and you didn't have Matthew's gospel and you were reading through Hosea you would say, "What does that have to do with Christ," because in Hosea's prophesy it doesn't appear to have anything to do with Christ.

Now you say, "Well, weren't there some other compelling reasons to go to Egypt?" If they didn't know about a prophesy why would they go there? Well, because the angel told them to go there. But they wouldn't have argued with the angel and I'll tell you why. Egypt had become a Jewish colony. They would find friendly environs there. Egypt was filled with Jewish refugees who had been migrating down there for a long time.

During the intertestamental period, that is the period of time at the conclusionof the writing of the Old Testament, the time of Ezra, the beginning of the writing of the New Testament 400 years elapsed.

400 years there was no Biblical writing. That's called the intertestamental period between the Old and the New Testament. During that 400 years of Biblical silence, revelatory silence broken by John the Baptist who finally came and God spoke after 400 years of silence, during that period of time there were some very, very serious things going on in the land of Israel, not the least of which by any means was the Maccabaean Revolt. There was a revolution going on at that particular time against the powers that were controlling Israel. The Jews always chafed against foreign oppressors and they did during that time. Because of those revolutions and terrorist activities and things like that some of the Jews had taken refuge in Egypt. They had migrated down there.

There was a community of people also in the land of Israel known as the Essenes. They were a nomadic, kind of a desert people who lived out in a kind of a primitive existence, somewhat monastic in their style of life, sort of an anti-social people. By the way they were the ones who apparently copied the Dead Sea Scrolls because the scrolls were found in an Essene area down by the Dead Sea.

But these people had also left Israel and migrated into Egypt for fear and didn't come back as well until Herod had died. So there were a number of Jews that had migrated into Egypt. To just let you know further about that Alexander the Great who lived in that intertestamental period of time established a new city in Egypt called Alexandria. In that city he assigned a portion of the city to the Jews who lived there, granting them special privilege along with the Macedonians of who he was one. So some Jews had come down there as refugees. Some Jews had been brought there by force after Alexander had conquered the area but many had migrated for more friendly reasons.

As much as 150 years before Christ there was a temple built by the Jews in Egypt. In a treatise written by Philo 40 years after the birth of Christ he says there were a million Jews in Egypt. So it was a place where there was a Jewish colony. I just say all of that to say it would make sense to Joseph and Mary to go there because they would find somebody to care for them and support them and maybe even somebody the knew or was related to people they knew. So the angel said to go there.

But it wasn't just for the fact that there would be some folks from home down there. It was because there was a prophesy to be fulfilled. Now what about that prophesy? How are we to understand the prophesy that is given by Hosea? Let me give you a little background.

If you're reading Hosea and you come to Hosea 11:1 where the words, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," are written you're not going to understand that that refers to Jesus Christ. You're not going to understand that. What you're going to understand is that that refers to Israel. That refers to Israel. In fact what it refers to is that God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt. Remember they were down there for 400 years in captivity?

God brought them, made them a nation and gave them the Promised Land. That's what it's referring to. It's referring to the time when God went into Egypt and delivered his people. Do you remember he sent 10 plagues and as a result of the 10 plagues finally Pharaoh got the message? Let my people go and let them go and then changed his mind and chased them and the Lord parted the Red Sea, they walked through and Pharaoh thought he could follow and his whole army was drowned at that spot. Then the children of Israel wandered for 40 years finally entering the Promised Land.

That is what is referred to in Hosea 11:1. "Out of Egypt have I called my son." In other words God had selected Israel to be his child while they were in Egypt and called them out, made them a nation and led them into the Promised Land. Do you remember? He apportioned all of the Promised Land to the various 12 tribes, he established the Levitical priesthood. Now the Levies and the priests, he did all of that and established them as a nation bringing them out of Egypt. That is the significance of Hosea 11:1.

What is behind that is the great love of God. It's very much like it says in Deuteronomy where Deuteronomy 32 talks about God has chosen Israel because of his great love. Now that's behind the significance of the statement in Hosea 11:1.

Let me give you a little background of the book of Hosea and this is going to take shape and it's a marvelous, marvelous prophesy. Here's the story of Hosea. Hosea preaches judgement. He deals with Israel's wickedness namely involvement in idolatry with all of its attendant sins. So the message of Hosea is the failure and the decadence of Israel. He preaches it again and again and again. But he does more than preach it. He illustrates it with his own life in a most graphic illustration. Hosea married a woman whose name was Gomer. I've always thought anybody who would marry a woman named Gomer was asking for some kind of trouble. But anyway, he married a woman named Gomer. Maybe it was a more significant name in ancient times. She turned out to be a prostitute. She turned out to be a prostitute. He calls her a wife of whoredom. She went after other lovers and in her prostitution even conceived and had illegitimate children. Hosea named them Not My Child. That was the name of one of them. But his heart was shattered because his wife had prostituted herself. But in spite of what she did he deeply loved her and instead of rejecting her he followed her around and made sure that all her needs were met while she was engaging in prostitution. It is not an illustration of tough love.

Finally instead of completely rejecting her he went to the hauntsof her whoredom and took 15 pieces of silver and a homer and half of barley, a rather large amount of barley and he bought her back off of the market. She was literally on a blacknaked being sold and he bought her and took her back and honored her as his wife.

Now all of this is applied to Israel. That is a graphic illustration of God's relationship to Israel. The message of Hosea is this; just as Hosea had married Gomer God had taken Israel as his wife. Just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea so is Israel was unfaithful to God. Just as Gomer was enslaved by her lovers so Israel was enslaved by idolatrous nations in whom she had placed her love. Just as Hosea's tender love restored Gomer so Jehovah would restore Israel. That's the book of Hosea.

So when Hosea's heart was broken, when he had seen the idea of his dream wrecked before his eyes, when he had seen his beloved wife become a prostitute with illegitimate children, when he had suffered frankly the worst agony that ever comes to the human heart then God said to him, "Hosea, now you know how I feel." That's the message of Hosea. It is the message of heartbreak.

It is at that point that God says, "Do you understand that it was out of Egypt I called my son," and God goes back to that initiating love. Ezekiel has magnificent language when he describes this. He says, "I found you when you were a kicking, screaming baby that somebody had just delivered and left in blood, in the dirt and I cleaned you up and kept you. I love you and I chose you and I took you out of Egypt with tremendous effort and I redeemed you from the captivity and I led you through the wilderness and I brought you to the Promised Land."

"When Israel was a child," it says in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt." If you were reading through Hosea you would understand that but you wouldn't understand that it had anything to do with Jesus. But it did. In fact it was a prophesy of the fact that Jesus would be called out of Egypt.

You say, "Well, how can it be a prophesy?" It is a prophesy in this sense, in what it called type, T-Y-P-E, type. I don't know how much you know about that. There are two kinds of prophesies in the Old Testament. There are verbal prophesies and there are typical prophesies. For example, if you think about the Old Testament you will see a number of types of Christ. The sacrificial lamb is the most notable one, right? Now listen to what I say very carefully. Nothing in the Old Testament is a type of Christ until the New Testament says it is. Did you hear that? Nothing in the Old Testament is a type of Christ until the New Testament says it is. Because it is a non-verbal picture unless the New Testament explains it we can't see it there.

So don't go into the Old Testament like so many do and they're painting, for example, a picture of the tabernacle or something and they say, "Well, this piece of wood in the back corner of the tabernacle represents Jesus." Does the New Testament say it does? If the New Testament says it does it does. If the New Testament doesn't say it does then it doesn't. It's purely arbitrary. How can you make that conclusion? Who would ever read Hosea and conclude that that verse in verse 1 of chapter 11 had anything to do with Jesus? Nobody but it was a typical prophesy fulfilled in Jesus Christ as noted in the New Testament. Then it makes perfect sense because Israel is at that point a type of Christ. It's a magnificent thing.

"Israel is my son, my first born," God says in Exodus 4:22 and so is Jesus, his son, his first born. Christ is called in Isaiah the servant of the Lord and so is Israel. Israel is God's child. So is Christ. God has great love for Israel and so he has for Christ. Israel is called out of Egypt and so is Christ. Here is one of those magnificent Old Testament types clearly indicated in the New Testament to be a type. The whole wonderful story of Israel being called out of Egypt was a picture of God calling his child, his first born, Jesus out of Egypt.

So you have verbal prophesy in the first prophesy and you have typical prophesy in the second and both of them are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ. If the Lord Jesus doesn't - well it couldn't happen - but if he doesn't go to Egypt and doesn't come out the prophesy never comes to pass. In some sense we say, "Well we would never know anyway," but it had to happen because that's how God intended it. It did happen. He went to Egypt, he came out of Egypt and we are told that Israel's exodus was a picture of Christ coming out of Egypt.

Why this? Why so much attention to this? Why do you have to go through all of this? Because it's just another important peg in the credentials of Jesus Christ. Some would be Messiah says, "Well, I was born in Bethlehem." Not enough. There's more.

Let's go to the third prophesy, the ravaging of Rama, verses 16 and following. Now we come to another location. We've got Bethlehem; we've got Egypt under our belt. Let's come to Rama. This too is - this is an amazing, amazing use of Scripture. When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the Magi who didn't of course tell him where the child was, he became very enraged and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its environs from 2 years old and under according to the time which he had ascertained from Magi. This man is paranoid to put it mildly. He slaughters every single child in the whole area to prevent one from growing up and being a threat to his throne.

Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled saying, "A voice was heard in Rama weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and she refused to be comforted because they were no more." This is amazing. This is absolutely amazing. Herod comes. Any child 2 years old and under - by the way a child was called two as soon as he entered his second year. We would still be saying they were 1 year old but the Jews did it right. The first year was the one year. The second year was the 2 year. So this would actually be children between what we say is the age of 1 and 2 and under. He slaughtered them all.

You can't even imagine the horror of that little village of Bethlehem and the area around it as Herod sent his soldiers to stab their swords through the hearts of those little ones or cut their heads off. You can't even fathom it and the weeping and the wailing and the people rushing to hide their little babies to save their precious lives. But this fulfilled the prophesy of Jeremiah.

In Jeremiah chapter 31, I'm going to read it to you in verse 15, "Thus says the Lord a voice is heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted for her children because they are no more." Now there is a direct prophesy right out of Jeremiah but it's different than either of the first two. Let me tell you why. This is very fascinating to me.

Jeremiah was prophesying the captivity. He was prophesying before the people of Israel were carried away into captivity. He was predicting that when the captivity came there would be tremendous weeping and that that weeping would take place in Rama.

Where was Rama? Well, Rama was a very special place. Rama was a village, a small village about 5 miles or 6 miles north of Jerusalem on the high place, a raised place. In fact Rama means elevated place, high place. It was right on the border of the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. It was where the people were gathered to be transported into captivity. It was really the village on the border. So it wept when the northern kingdom went and it wept when the southern kingdom went. It was right in the middle.

So the groups from both of those kingdoms were deported into captivity from the vicinity of Rama. That's what was going on. It was a heartbreaking situation. It was the place where the conquerors ordered the defeated multitude to be assembled and deported. By the way many had been slaughtered before the deportation. So death was already in the air and now deportation. Now they're no longer a nation. Now they're being taken away from the Promised Land.

So Rama represents both kingdoms. Rama represents the weeping and the sadness that Jeremiah says is going to come when you're taken captive for your sins. How is Rachel involved? Because it says here Rachel weeping for her children. Why Rachel?

Well Rachel was the mother in one sense of both kingdoms. One of her sons, Joseph, brought forth two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh and Ephraim was always the most often identified with the northern kingdom. In fact the norther kingdom is called Israel and Ephraim. But Rachel also was the mother of Benjamin who was part of the southern kingdom. So Rachel weeps when Israel goes and Rachel weeps when Juda goes because she has progeny in both. Though Rachel is long gone the picture here is of the weeping of Israel and its children are gone. Rachel is sort of the personification of Israel's weeping as she loses both lines that have come through her children. She's watching sort of figuratively or symbolically the multitudes gathered in Rama to be taken away. She listens to their weeping and she begins to weep as well.

You remember Rachel back in Genesis 30 and verse 1 said, "Give me children or I die." She thought she would die without having children. God gave her children and children who broke her heart.

Assyria and Babylon had taken her children away. Jeremiah sees this in his prophesy but he sees more than that. Here is an illustration of another kind of prophesy. You have a direct verbal prophesy, you have a typi logical prophesy and now you have a double fulfillment prophesy.

There are throughout the Old Testament prophesies that have a double fulfillment. In fact if you're studying Scripture and if you're going through it we call it a near/farfulfillment. There is an element of it that is fulfilled near and an element of it fulfilled far. You find those all throughout the Old Testament. I note all of those by the way in the study Bible that we're involving in doing right now so that you'll be able to look at a prophesy and see that is has a near and a far intent.

The far intent takes us to the birth of Christ. This is a remarkable thing, a remarkable thing. Let me tell you why. How does this apply? "A voice was heard in Rama weeping in great mourning." Look, we understand the weeping and the great mourning don't we? We understand mothers weeping, sobbing as the little lives are ripped out of their arms and executed before their very eyes. We understand that she would refuse to be comforted because the child was no more. That we understand. But what about Rama and what about Rachel?

I'll give it to you very simply. One mile north of Bethlehem scholars tell us there was an area that had come be known as Rama. If you have ever driven from Jerusalem to Bethlehem you go out of Jerusalem up a little high place and then down a little into Bethlehem. At that high place, that's a Rama, that's a high place. You will notice and the tour guide will always point and say that is Rachel's tomb. So even today there is a Rachel at Rama. At the time of Christ the spot of Rachel's tomb was there as well. So there is a different Rama, not the high place north of Jerusalem but a new Rama south and there is there Rachel's tomb. How appropriate that God orchestrates all of that to bring together the near and far fulfillment. So in another Rama in the area of Rachel's tomb mothers weep again because their children are slaughtered.

Then there is fourth prophesy. The fourth prophesy is a different one yet and for quite remarkable reasons. When Herod was dead, verse 19, "An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream," this is the third time it's been mentioned that God spoke in a dream and he said to Joseph you can go back, take the child, his mother; go to the land of Israel. It's time to return. He rose, took the child and his mother, came to the land of Israel.

He had heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the place of his father. He was afraid to go there. He was afraid to stay in the southern part, in Judea because he thought maybe Archelaus being sired by Herod would have some of his traits and maybe carry on the same attitude toward the King and it was right. I think it was an accurate assessment because he was again warned by God in a dream and departed north to the regions of Galilee and came and resided in a city called Nazareth. Why? That what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled he shall be called a Nazarene.

It wasn't long after the family was in Egypt that Herod died. By the way he died, according to Josephusulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath and no physicians, Josephus writes, nor warm baths could lead to his recovery. After his death they came back but not wanting to come to an area where his influence was still existing by his son they went to Galilee as directed in the dream. He went to a place called Nazareth.

This was by the way Joseph's original home and he was to go back there because that's what the prophet's said. This is the interesting part. You say, "Where in the Old Testament did they say this?" Answer: No where. You say, "Well, wait a minute. It says the prophets said it." They did. It just wasn't recorded in the Old Testament. It is a statement by some of the Old Testament prophets apparently known, maybe even well-known. It needs no explanation. There's no defense of it. There's not even the names of the prophets but it was one among perhaps many prophesies that were not recorded or written down in the Old Testament.

When you read for example in the Old Testament about messages that were spoken about prophets you don't necessarily have every word they spoke. Sometimes you might have a summary of what they said even as you do of the sermons of Jesus in the Gospels. There is a reference in the book of Jude to the prophesy of Enoch which isn't recorded in the Old Testament either. But here the Holy Spirit refers to it. It was a prophesy.

As John said at the end of his Gospel if everything was written about the Lord Jesus Christ that could be written the books of the world couldn't contain it. Right? So there was much about Jesus Christ that was supernatural that is not recorded in the New Testament and there was much in the Old Testament that was done by God and spoken by God through prophets that was not recorded. This introduces us to yet another area of prophesy.

You have direct specific verbal prophesy, you have typi logical prophesy, you have double fulfillment, far and near prophesy and you have prophesy that is unrecorded in the Old Testament. You take it from any one of those venues of prophetic material it all focuses on Christ. Born in Bethlehem, out of Egypt, in Rama there was weeping and he went to Nazareth and became a Nazarene. All of this sovereignly orchestrated in the incredible mind of God and brought to pass in the person of Jesus Christ. Is he the King? Is he the Messiah? His credentials prove it. He is of the line of David. His virgin birth proves it. He was born without a human father. The prophesy of Isaiah said it. He would be born of a virgin and the place where he was born, the land from which he came, the town that wept and the city he dwelled in all indicate this is the Messiah. The argument in evidence is overwhelming, absolutely overwhelming. That's how Matthew closes his case. In the next scene John the Baptist comes preaching to introduce Christ.

Many years intervene between the end of chapter 2 and 3, the beginning of 3, many years. Jesus grows from being a toddler to his ministry and there's silence there except for two things, the occasion when he went to the temple at the age of 12 and confounded the learned theologians with his questions and the fact that he is stated to have grown in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. That's all we know about those silent years until he embarks upon his ministry. But Matthew knew that the evidence was complete and satisfactory to anyone with a heart to believe.

Let's pray together. Lord, we continue to be amazed at the depth and detail to which you go to show us the truth. We are overwhelmed again to contemplate that this one who was born on Christmas as we call it, this one who came into the world in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago was in fact fulfilling every specific prophesy required to be the Messiah. You made it so abundantly clear. Lord, the implications of the fact that he is the Messiah touch our hearts. He came as King. He came as Redeemer. He came as Savior. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to give his life, a ransom for many. He came to save his people from their sins. He came to establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness and salvation for all who believe. We believe. We commit our lives to him in faith. I pray that for every soul here that none will turn his back on the true savior, the King, the prophesied one who fulfilled every prophesy and is indeed the Savior sent from Heaven to save sinners, to fill their life with blessing and their eternity with bliss and joy. Thank you again for this great truth. We give you glory in your Son's name. Amen.

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