



Matthew 2:5, 15, 17, 23

Four Prophecies in Matthew Chapter Two

God works His will despite the opposition of sinful people. Earthly kings like Herod may try to circumvent the divine purpose, but in the end they are always defeated. What was true in the first advent of Jesus will also hold true at His second advent.

The foundation of the Gospel of Matthew is the Old Testament with its Messianic and Kingdom promises. Jesus the Messiah is truly the promised King. He is legally the royal king of Israel.

In his story of the birth of Jesus the apostle Matthew uses four prophecies from the Old Testament as hooks on which to present his message. It is necessary to study these Old Testament passages in their context to see their significance in the New Testament. Clearly the early Christians understood these as being fulfilled with the coming of Christ. The coming of the King was the fulfillment of the prophecies. The Gospel writers understood the Old Testament Scriptures as complete units in their context and the individual sentences they quoted were as sign posts pointing to the Messiah.

Matthew chapter two is a prophecy indicating the progression of the new history. It quickly reveals the condition of things which will occur around this King from the period following His first advent, until His second advent. It is a microcosm of the Christian age, revealing principles that abide unto this hour.

The Bible student must always take time to search out the references to the Old Testament he finds in the New Testament. We must see them in their relation to the background, circumstances, situation, and total context of the Old Testament.

THE FULFILMENT OF FOUR PROPHECIES IN THE COMING OF JESUS

The four prophecies in Matthew chapter two present a study in contrasts and a picture of the true spiritual state of the Jewish people when the Messiah came to them. The Shepherd of Israel came from humble stock in extremely humble circumstances.

Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6

Matthew tells us the humble village of Bethlehem is contrasted with the greatness of what it will become when God bestows it with glory. From Bethlehem there comes forth a glorious ruler in Israel. Dominion will return to the house of David. The insignificance of Bethlehem is seen from the circumstances of its being left out of the list of towns in the tribe of Judah.

Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch write, "The birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, and not in Jerusalem the city of David, presupposes that the family of David, out of which it is to spring, will have lost the throne, and have fallen in poverty. This could only arise from the giving up of Israel into the power of its enemies. "

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2, NASB 1995). In Matthew's paraphrase the last clause is apparently assimilated from 2 Samuel 5:2. Matthew writes: "They said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel (Matthew 2:5-6, NASB 1995).

The old Jewish synagogue unanimously regarded this passage as containing a prophecy of the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem. The fulfillment by the fact that Christ was actually born in Bethlehem cannot be looked upon as accidental circumstances because His parents were not residents of Bethlehem, but Nazareth.

The message of the book of Micah was authority. Who is like Jehovah? He announces the certainty of Judah's captivity and restoration by the authority of Yahweh.

Matthew points out that Bethlehem was insignificant among the thousands of Judah, but from this town came the mighty ruler of Israel. He is specific that it is Bethlehem of Judea, not Bethlehem in Zebulun. The ruler will shepherd His people like David. Just as youthful David had been an insignificant shepherd in this small village and God exalted him to be a king of Israel, so this insignificant village the Messiah would be born and crowned with glory. God raised him from being a shepherd of lambs to the shepherd of the nation. The Ruler proceeding from Bethlehem is the Messiah.

Micah saw the revelation of the coming of the true King as opposed to the false rulers of his own time. Matthew and the other gospel writers present two outstanding observations. There will be those who will come and worship the Ruler, but others will hate Him. Wise men with their gold, frankincense, and myrrh will come in adoration of the King, while Herod and his followers will seek to destroy Him. Some will welcome Him; others will kill Him.

No one looked for a king or ruler of greatness to arise out of little Bethlehem. Out of this small, insignificant village would come a Governor, a Ruler who would cast a great influence over the world. This great ruler shall be a shepherd to the people whom He rules. Matthew notes that Bethlehem's greatness consists in that it is the birthplace of this great ruler. This is the emphasis in Micah.

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Micah tells us where the promised Messiah King will be born and Matthew tells us here is the fulfillment in the person of Jesus the Messiah. The Old Testament also foretold *how* the Messiah would be born and *where* He would be born.

How tragic when modern scholars read passages such as Genesis 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; 9:6; 52:13-53:12, etc. and fail to see Christ in them. The great misfortune in our day is not seeing too much of Christ in the Old Testament; it is seeing too little of Him (Luke 24:25-27).. King Herod and the Jewish Sanhedrin did not doubt the plain reference to Micah 5:2.

Matthew challenges his readers to bow down and worship Christ the King Who shall shepherd my people Israel. "The Shepherd is the King.

Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15

"When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1, NASB 1995).

There is a pattern of revelation that Jesus Himself is the exact center of true Israel. It is an important principle of interpretation that the New Testament writers insist that the Old Testament can be rightly interpreted only if the complete revelation is kept in perspective as it is historically unfolded.

It is apparent that Matthew regards Israel as a type of the Messiah when he quotes Hosea 11:1 and applies it to Christ. In the Gospels there is a kind of Israel-Jesus typology, in that what could be said of the old Israel could on occasion have its application to Jesus. An example can be seen in Matthew who sees in the history of Jesus a recapitulation of that of Israel. In the Exodus Yahweh protected His people, so God has protected His Son, the Messiah. Jesus Christ is God's Son. This is the first time that Matthew speaks of Jesus as "Son" with reference to the heavenly Father. That Jesus is the Son of God is a very important idea for Matthew.

The bond between Israel and Christ is closer than the word "type" would imply. If Israel had been destroyed in Egypt the Messianic prophecies would never have been fulfilled. God's plan would have been destroyed. They are closely related to Israel and the Messiah. Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; 49:10 are good examples of this relationship. Prophetically, when Israel was delivered out of Egypt, Christ was called out, too. Salvation is of the Jews. The Messiah came out of Israel.

The eternal purpose of God runs through the whole Old Testament and points to the climax which is the coming of Christ.

The reference by the prophet is to Israel as a nation that has lived in corruption and failure as the chosen people of God. The prophet has dealt with spiritual adultery as the worst of all sins. Idolatry is not fitting for the people of God. Israel has sunk to the lowest state of affairs in her relation to Yahweh.

The prophet Hosea can empathize with God because of his own deep personal pain of an unfaithful wife. In effect God was saying to Hosea, "Now, you know what I am feeling about my people Israel, because Israel has played the harlot against Me. Out of his own personal tragedy the prophet sang the love song of Yahweh.

When Israel was a young man, I loved him like a son, and I summoned my son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1 NET). The Messiah is the personification of the true Israel. The imagery is powerful and suggests that He repeats in His own life story the experience of the nation Israel. The Messiah is the redeemer and deliverer,

repeats in His own life story the experience of the nation Israel. The Messiah is the redeemer and deliverer, the second and greater Moses. His supreme work of salvation had as its prototype the mighty act of salvation wrought by God through Moses on behalf of His chosen people. Israel was considered by the LORD as His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). Matthew is emphasizing that just as Moses was called to go to Egypt and rescue Israel, firstborn son from physical bondage, so Jesus was called out of Egypt in His infancy, through the divine message given to Joseph, to save mankind from the bondage of sin.

In Hosea and Matthew Yahweh is singing of His love for Israel. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. Matthew applied that love song to the Messiah. Yahweh says to Israel, I“ loved you, and brought you out of Egypt. Egypt was the place of oppression, and slavery. God says, I“ brought you out. I delivered you out of Egypt. The greater deliverer has delivered His people out of a greater bondage. The Jewish people understood the coming of the Messianic salvation in the light of their exodus experience. The early Christians understood the redemption provided by Jesus in the same light.

Just as God had called His people out of Egypt with a great demonstration of the power of redemption, so He would do once again through His greater Son in redeeming His people from their sin. Moses was a servant; Jesus is the Son.

John Broadus said, As Israel in the childhood of the nation was called out of Egypt, so Jesus. We may even find resemblances in minute details; His temptation of forty days in the desert, resembles Israel s temptation of forty years in the desert, which itself corresponded to the forty days spent by the spies (Num. 14:34). Thus we see how Hosea s historical statement concerning Israel may have been also a prediction concerning Messiah, as the Evangelist declares it was. It is not necessary to suppose that this was present to the prophet s consciousness. ”

When Christ came the man sitting on the throne of Judah was not of the seed of David, but a pagan, outside the Covenant of Israel. The grave sin of Israel was that of making alliances with pagan powers. How fitting a symbol is Herod of the infidelity of a national leadership. He is not the true Shepherd. He was not a Jew. His father was an Idumean and his mother an Arabian, but the Romans made him King of Judea in 40 B.C. He was a corrupt tyrant and paranoid murderer. He drove the chosen King out of Judah down into Egypt. Spiritual adultery has a way of doing just that. Egypt in the Bible is a symbol of the place of oppression and sin. The chosen King does not stay in Egypt. He pays the price of redemption and comes out of Egypt. Jesus comes out of Egypt and leads forth a greater Exodus. The Child comes out of Egypt leading a great and glorious exodus of God s chosen people.

Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:17-18

"Thus says the Lord, A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more (Jeremiah 31:15, NASB 1995).

Jeremiah lived in the most tragic days in the history of Judea. He lived at a time when the Babylonians were battering down the doors to the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 31-33 are the words of a weeping prophet.

A greater than Jeremiah wept over the city of Jerusalem crying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that kills the prophets, and stones them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate . . . (Luke 13:34-35a). The very tears of God ran down His cheeks. It is a prophecy of suffering and tears. God is shown weeping for His people.

Jeremiah was at the very heart of the deportation of the Jewish people in Jerusalem by the Babylonians. He pictured Rachel figuratively wailing as she watched the wretched exiles as they tramped past her tomb in Ramah on their way to a strange and pagan land. Broadus says, "This captivity seemed to threaten the complete destruction of the nation, with all their national hopes; and the bitter grief of the people is poetically described by representing Rachel, one of the mothers of the nation—the mother of the tribe in whose territory the exiles were assembled—as risen from the grave, and bewailing their destruction; while the prophet comforts her with the assurance that there is hope for nation, for the people will be restored. "

It is as if Rachael is saying, "I gave my life to bear a son, and now his descendants are no more. "

Rachel had not suffered in vain when she died in giving birth to Benjamin (Gen. 35:16-20). Neither shall the people going into exile prove to be without purpose. They shall come again from the land of the enemy. There is hope in the end. The children shall return to their own land. Out of the sorrow of the Babylonian exile came new life for Israel.

Herod had determined that no child within the area of Bethlehem and time frame indicated by the Magi would remain alive. If the infant Messiah is slain, then is Israel ruined. Suppose only that some at Bethlehem, who had heard of the shepherds and the Magi, now despondingly believed that the newborn king was slain, and their mourning would really correspond to that mourning at Ramah, which Jeremiah poetically described. Yes, there is true morning in the homes of the twenty or so families who have lost their baby sons, but the suffering is a symbol of a great mourning of the nation.

It is a picture of the people of Israel strewn with blood and tears. Herod's rage is unfurled upon the elect of God. It was a mini-holocaust. The people are weeping. The exile to Babylon was a fact. You cannot erase the fact of the killings at Bethlehem. But in spite of the suffering, Matthew stresses that God is still pursuing His eternal purpose of redemption.

The emphasis in Matthew is on the mourning, not the mourners, because there is lamentation, which would be a loud weeping.

Out of the wail of death comes life. The spiritual deliverance for Israel is the establishment of David's throne and kingdom. In the context of this passage in Jeremiah, there is a note of hope (Jer. 31:17). God promises a new covenant (31:31-34). Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The exodus of Jesus from Egypt after the death of Herod the Great is a reminder of the greater exodus of the children of Israel that Jesus provides as our Redeemer, Savior, Branch and Deliverer. Matthew makes it very clear that God's sovereign protection extended to Egypt. His angel watched over them in Egypt and gave Joseph specific directions.

The climax of the story of the birth of Jesus is reached with the words, "He shall be called a Nazarene. " Joseph returned with the Child to Israel in obedience to the divine instruction he received. Herod's son Archelaus is as evil as the old man. It is not surprising that Joseph moved on back to his hometown of Nazareth away from Jerusalem (Luke 1:26; 2:4). The important thing Matthew has in mind is that he went to the region of Galilee to live. His new home was in Nazareth.

'He shall be called a Nazarene' (Matthew 2:23)

Matthew found another fulfillment of prophecy in this choice of residence. The apostle obviously takes it as a

Matthew found another fulfilment of prophecy in this choice of residence. The apostle obviously takes it as a fulfilment of prophecy that Jesus moved to Nazareth. The only problem for us is that Matthew does not explain how he came to that conclusion.

No such words are found in the Old Testament, and there is no clear explanation as to where it comes from. It is not easy to find the words "he will be called a Nazarene" in any of the prophetic books, or for that matter, anywhere in the Old Testament.

Perhaps the best explanation is found in the suggestion a shoot, or branch (Isa. 11:1). Jesus was not a Nazirite. The expression "Jesus the Nazarene" carried with it overtones of contempt. Jesus was despised and rejected.

A. T. Robertson says, "It may be that this term of contempt (John 1:46; 7:52) is what is meant, and that several prophecies are to be combined like Psa. 22:6, 8; 69:11, 19; Isa. 53:2, 3, 4. The name Nazareth means a shoot or branch, but it is by no means certain that Matthew has this in mind. It is best to confess that we do not know."

The word "prophets" is plural and can be understood to refer to the prophets in general or even to their writings.

Matthew introduces the statement as having been "spoken by the prophets" may be an indication that he was pointing out a truth in general terms that is true from what the prophets had taught.

Matthew seems to have in mind a number of the prophets when he speaks of the Nazarene. It was in Nazareth that the Messiah lived until it was time for Him to be publicly manifested to the people of Israel. The Messiah, who was born in the city of David, Bethlehem, was brought up in Nazareth, a small town never mentioned in the Old Testament. It was a place associated with Gentiles, non-Jewish pagans. Out of the land of the Gentiles, would come a Jewish Messiah who would be the Savior of the world (Isa. 9:1-9).

Yes, Matthew could be referring to a sprout or branch, like a tree that has been cut down and from the root springs forth a green sprout growing into a great tree. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" was a question of derision from a would be disciple of Jesus. The Messiah would come from a place despised, counted as nothing, just a tiny branch, a sprout. However the truth is found in Jeremiah 33:15, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth." In the LORD God's eyes the branch, the sprout, the thing held in contempt shall count! The thing despised shall have dominion! The Sprout became the Branch, clothed with the Spirit and majesty of God.

Here are inescapable prophecies from some of the Old Testament prophets that refer to the extreme humility and exaltation of the Messiah. Isaiah said, "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3). . . . "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). . . . "But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 'Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him'" (Psalm 22:6-8). . . . "They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion" (Psalm 22:13). The low estate and rejection by men is clear from many passages (Psa. 22:6-8, 13; 69:8, 20, 21; Isa. 11:1; 49:7; 53:2, 3, 8; Dan. 9:26; John 1:45, 46; 7:42; Matt. 12:24; 27:21-23, 63; Lk. 23:11; Jn. 1:11; 5:18; 6:66; 9:22, 24; Acts 24:5). The fulfilment of the prophecy comes from many of the prophets in general, not just one.

That which was held in contempt, derision and scorn was truly God's anointed one, the Branch (Isaiah 11:1; 4:2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12-13).

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1).

"In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel" (Isaiah 4:2).

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land " (Jeremiah 23:5).

"In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (Jeremiah 33:15).

"Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you —indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8).

"Then say to him, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices " (Zechariah 6:12-13).

These verses seem to be the most reasonable and consistent explanation of Matthew calling Jesus a Nazarene.

The Branch is a growth, or literally sprout and it is used in the ancient Near East to describe the rightful heir to the throne. Isaiah uses a different word, but with the same idea in mind. This heir will be an ideal king. He will act wisely and do what is just and right. During His reign Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, the LORD our righteousness. "

No matter how gloomy and desperate the present situation was in Judah, Yahweh promised to raise up to David a righteous branch. This one branch of David will sit on the throne forever and He will reign in righteousness. The second David, the Messiah's dominion will last forever. Only the one Good Shepherd of Yahweh stands in contrast to evil shepherds in Israel. What a contrast He is to Herod!

The righteous Shoot appeared to be dead, but it was not. This dynasty of David's tree would burst forth like a shoot. From the most humble and despised origins sprang for the Anointed of the LORD God!

The resurrected Jesus responded to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus when he asked, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting " (Acts 22:8).

SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

It is encouraging to know that in the history of redemption everything proceeds according to God's eternal plan.

Morgan says when you take the four prophecies together you have:

Homage and Hatred.

Exile and Exodus.

Sorrow and Song

Meanness and Majesty. ”

Where is the King today?

More people worship Jesus Christ today than at anytime in the last 2000 years. At the same time, this is the most persecuted generation in history of Christianity.

Yes, it is sad, but there are those who hate the King. However, we bring our gold and lay it at His feet. We will worship Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords. Will you bow to Him today?

Do you pay homage to the King or do you treat Him with hostility?

What is the effect of His Kingdom?

Many in our world are exiled in their hearts from the King. Their hearts are filled with sadness and emptiness. They do not know the peace that only He can bring to a sinful, depraved and hostile world.

The King is leading out of Egypt a great multitude of people who have chosen to enter into His Kingdom. They have responded to God's eternal love and kindness.

What is your evaluation of the King?

Do I hear you saying, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" The media is filled with that nonsense today. The Da Vinci Code, the Jesus Seminars, and the Secular religion wail out of their hostile attitudes toward the King.

What will you do with Jesus of Nazareth? I choose to crown Him King of my life. He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Come and worship Him.

Do you sing a song of the sorrowful today, or the song of a soul set free? These themes that were developed by the apostle Matthew in chapter two of his gospel remains true to this day. They are being played out in history as well as in the hearts of every individual.

Who is Jesus Christ? What have you chosen to do with Him? Neutral you cannot be; He will not allow you to be neutral. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other Savior.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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