

Prophetic Fullness

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 2. I'll read Matthew 2 verse 13 through to the end of the chapter and then you can have a talk to the person next to you about things that stand out or things that might be a little bit tricky to understand and then we'll press into the passage together.

I'll pray and then we'll read. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, thank you that you give us your word and we pray this morning as we delve into it and you speak to us that we be good hearers and good listeners.

And give us hearts to obey. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Matthew chapter 2, picking up verse 13. Now when they departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you.

For Herod's about to search for the child to destroy him. And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Out of Egypt I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he'd been tricked by the wise men, became furious and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he'd ascertained from the wise men.

[1 : 34] Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping in loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children.

She refused to be comforted because they are no more. But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. When he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

This is where the Lord thanks be to God. Okay, over to you to have a little talk to the person next to you about things that stand out, questions you might have, and then we'll press in in a second or two. Okay.

[2 : 57] Well, the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1, that we're better off than the angels and better off than the prophets. Let me read to you what he says in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 10.

Concerning our salvation, that's my word, concerning our salvation. The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you in the things that have now been announced to you, through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which even angels longed to look.

So the prophets didn't completely understand what they wrote. They didn't get it then when they wrote them down. God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, Jesus, was at work in them.

And their work and their words speak of the sufferings of Christ Jesus and his glories. So it's Jesus who unlocks the realities of the prophets.

[4 : 15] And the prophets were ultimately speaking about him. It's all clear though now, we're in a much better position historically than the prophets ever were.

Because we live this side of the sufferings of the Christ. And we have found what the prophets were looking forward to.

And so Matthew and the rest of the New Testament reveals to us what these prophets were speaking about. So it's my prayer this morning that we'll have a growing grasp of God's glory in bringing Jesus into the world.

The one who unlocks Israel's history and fulfills and reveals the mysteries of the prophets. So we pick up the life of Jesus now when he's not yet two years old.

Remember last week, Rome rules the world. Herod was the great king of Judea, Herod the Great. He was a reluctant Jew, an Idymian.

[5 : 19] He was a sycophant of Rome and Caesar. The saying goes that it was better to be one of Herod's pigs than one of his sons. It's the Pax Romana, you know, the peace of Rome as well.

But it's anything but peaceful in Jerusalem. The whole of Jerusalem is troubled because Herod's troubled on hearing that wise men from the east have come, magi, and they know that there's been a king who's been born.

And so they have come to worship the king of the Jews. But Herod is the king of the Jews. And when they asked Herod where he was, it's clear that Jesus, king of the Jews, the one who came to save his people from their sins, is not in the palace where Herod is.

And Herod's consulted with the Jewish leaders. They inform him that the Christ will be born in Bethlehem. So Herod sends the wise men off to Bethlehem to go and find him and let him know where he is.

So that he can come and worship him. But the wise men didn't, right? Because they were warned in a dream not to tell Herod and they returned to their own country.

[6 : 31] You see that there in verse 12. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Now in today's passage, right, Jesus fulfills three Old Testament prophecies about him.

And it's the understanding of the New Testament, use of the Old Testament, which enables us to read the Old Testament properly. So there's three prophecies that are here for us.

One, out of Egypt I called my son. Two, Rachel weeping for her children, Prophet Jeremiah. First one's out of Hosea. And then he will be called a Nazarene from the prophets.

And what we see here is the opening chapters of Matthew is a replay of the history of Israel. Right? Of Israel the nation. In the life of Jesus.

And we've been given the genesis, right, of Jesus from Abraham to David. And from David to the Babylonian exile. From the Babylonian exile to the life of Jesus.

[7 : 34] And now we have the exile and the exodus. Right? Intricately woven together in this passage before us this morning. There are two really big milestones to plonk down in our knowledge of the Bible and history.

The first is the exodus, which happened in about 1400 BC, roughly around then, probably. The exodus out of Egypt. Right? And the exile.

Right? There's part A of the exile. The Assyrians. By the Assyrians. They come and charge down, take the northern ten tribes in 722 BC. And the destruction and deportation of the northern ten tribes.

And then part B. Right? The Babylonians, which started in about 587, roughly. With the destruction and the deportation of the southern two tribes of Israel off to Babylon.

Collectively known, those southern two tribes as Judah. Exodus, exile. Exodus, two major planks to get in our knowledge of the Old Testament.

[8 : 43] And through it all, we see the seemingly fragile plan of God being brought about through his sovereign superintending and protection.

So here in verses 13 to 15, God warns Joseph of the trouble that's about to come in Bethlehem.

The wise men didn't tell Herod where to find this one born king of the Jews.

And Herod's about to search for him to destroy him. Right? Make sure that he's not a threat to his rule. That is, kill him.

Using the same kind of language that a farmer uses when they do that to an animal. They destroy the animal, you know. Put him down.

Kill him. And we hear the first of four times when Joseph rises, takes a child and his mother to go somewhere. And this time they go to Egypt. I think I've got a bit of a slide up here.

[9 : 41] You'll see that. So they go from Bethlehem down to Egypt. Right? That's where they go, down across to Egypt. Egypt is nearby.

It's somewhere about 4 BC now, right? Egypt is nearby. It's well-ordered Roman province, just like Palestine, where Judah and Herod's ruling.

But it's out of the jurisdiction of Herod. And strange enough, this is bringing about the fulfillment of Hosea, chapter 11, verse 1.

Out of Egypt I called my son. Now, we need to know when Hosea was written, right? It's written just before the exile to Assyria, right?

In the last days of the kings of Israel. And it's written to Israel, promising that they'll be punished for their faithfulness to the Lord their God, their adulterous worship of foreign idols, foreign gods, and worse, their prostitution of themselves to foreign gods.

[10:49] You know? Hosea brings God's prophetic word to them. And chapter 11 is towards the end of the book. And in it we see God's heartache over the nation of Israel.

Because he's going to punish his rebellious son. The rebellious son that he loves so much. And in verse 1, he says in Hosea chapter 11, When Israel was a child, I loved him.

And out of Egypt I called my son. Now, can you remember when Israel was first called out of Egypt? It takes us to the book of Exodus. The 12 tribes of Israel went down to Egypt to escape the famine in the land. Seventy people in all were Joseph included, right?

These down there. They were there for 400 years in Egypt. During that time they suffered greatly under Pharaoh. And God heard his cry of his people. And he raises Moses up to save his people out of Egypt.

[11:55] And in Exodus chapter 4 verse 21, listen to this. The Lord said to Moses, So when you go back to Egypt, See that you go before Pharaoh and do all the miracles that I've put in your power.

But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. Then you just say to Pharaoh, listen to this, Exodus 4.22. Thus says the Lord, let Israel, my firstborn son, go.

Finally Moses leads them out, right? And so Israel is God's firstborn son, who he called out of Egypt.

So now Jesus is God's firstborn son.

God's son. He is the true son. And he relives the history of Israel and goes down to Egypt so that he might live, right?

[12:59] But there's a flicker of hope in Hosea. But only a flicker of hope in Hosea. And that flicker of hope also comes in chapter 11.

As God says, have a listen to this, in verses 8 and 9. How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admar?

How can I treat you like Zeboiim? That is, how can God be really ruthless with his own son and send him into exile and destroy him? Because Admar and Zeboiim were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.

That was the people they're talking about there. Salt from fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. And listen to what he says. My heart recoils within me.

My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst.

[13:58] And I will not come in wrath. And so Jesus is the one who is the fulfillment of Hosea 11. He's faithful Israel, God's faithful son, the true son of God.

The son who is saved from peril. Who he brings up out of Egypt in the new Exodus. The new Israel, the true son of God.

And in him the hope of a new Israel. And it's Jesus who unlocks then the riches of Israel's history in the Exodus. And fulfills the mysteries that the prophet Hosea is speaking of.

Which then brings us to verse 16 in Matthew chapter 2. Have a look at it with me. It's infanticide.

In the first instance, Herod's murderous ways fulfill what God says through the angel.

[15:17] You know, angel said that Herod's going to do this and now he's doing it. Herod's furious, right? But not just furious, he's exceedingly furious.

Having been tricked by the wise men. So to make sure he kills every possibility of a rival king existing. He goes and makes sure that he has all the male children in Bethlehem.

And in all that region. Who were two years or old or under killed. Infanticide. Can you imagine it?

I mean, if one child's killed in a car accident, we're mortified. Let alone hundreds and hundreds of little boys being sought out and killed.

The wailing of the parents would be inconsolable. And the mothers, the mothers who gave them birth, the mothers of Israel would be completely distraught.

[16:21] Parents among us here, if you had your infant boy killed. For no particular reason, other than the fury of a king.

Which fulfills what God said through the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 31. A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation.

Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more. This is something, frankly, that few of us have ever had, or hopefully never will, experience.

But unfortunately, genocide is a recurring evil that comes up in the world. From Herod, to Hitler, to Pol Pot. This is something we can read with cool academic distance.

But the reality is incredible grief. Now, the context of Jeremiah 31 is the Babylonian exile now.

[17:37] And the events leading up to it, 587 BC. It came about with incredible suffering in Jerusalem. Starvation, slaughter, and even tender-hearted mothers being so hungry that they ate their own children.

It was a terrible time in Israel's history. Culminating in the destruction of the Temple of Solomon.

The place where you would meet with God. The place where you would hear from God.

The place where your sins were dealt with by God. The place where your national identity came from. And they were carted off, the survivors, to Babylon.

Here's a bit of a picture for you, hopefully. Now, Rama was the staging point for the exile to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's imperial guard.

Rama lies just to the north of Jerusalem. And Rachel's tomb lies in the vicinity of Rama near Bethlehem.

[18:59] That's where Rachel's tomb is. Now, Rachel, right, was Jacob's favourite wife. And so, at one level, the mother of Israel.

And Jeremiah 31 and 15 speaks of her mourning as her children go off to exile. Mourning, weeping, lamenting, inconsolably, as they are led past her tomb to go to Babylon.

And she's crying out from the grave. She died a thousand years earlier or so. And here, with the killing of the children of the Herod in Matthew chapter 2, there is where Jeremiah 31 is heading.

Rachel is crying again from the grave. Rachel's weeping for her children. And she refuses to be comforted because they're no more. The baby boys are being slaughtered.

But that's not all, right? Jeremiah 31, 15 is also written within the context of hope, of the return of the exile. Despite the tears, despite the death and destruction, there's going to be hope.

[20:16] And this hope is now being realised through the Messiah, having escaped the executioners of Herod. We're not just reliving the history of Israel here.

The tears here are not just for the ones who are going into exile, but for the baby boys who are slaughtered in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. So, why mention the exiles at all?

Well, it looms large, right? Looms large in the genealogy of Israel and in the genealogy of Jesus in chapter 1.

It's a turning point in the history of Israel. At one level, Israel never really returned from exile, even though they were in their land. But the context of Jeremiah 31 moves us forward, right?

In the next few verses, and speaks about a new covenant that the Lord will make with his people. And then the tears will end. The tears of the exile are being fulfilled.

[21:27] The tears of Rachel begun in Jeremiah's day come to an end in the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem. Let me read to you Jeremiah 31, verse 16. Thus says the Lord, Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work, declares the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

There is hope for your future, declares the Lord, and your children should come back to their own country. Then you keep coming down to verse 21. Set up road markers for yourselves, make yourself guideposts, consider well the highway, the road by which you went.

Return, O virgin Israel, return to these your cities. How long would you waver, O faithless daughter?

For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth, this is a new thing, a woman encircles a man.

Which is a very strange idea. Which is meant to be, right? The way in which God will bring the deliverance is going to be entirely a new thing. And then come down to verse 31, and I've got it on the slide hopefully behind us here.

We have this new covenant, this new strange thing, verse 31. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

[22 : 46] And like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord, for this is the covenant that I'll make.

The covenant means basically a contract, a one-way contract really, between God and his people. And I'll make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord, I'll put my law within them and I'll write it on their hearts.

And I will be their God and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother saying, know the Lord, for they shall know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquity and I'll remember their sin no more. Here's a new covenant coming, written on the hearts, not on tablets of stone, where God brings about complete forgiveness. Well, the heir to David's throne has come. The exile may soon be over. The true son of God has arrived. The king of the Jews has arrived.

[23 : 57] The king on king's David throne will be occupied by David's son. And the new covenant promised in Jehovah 31 is about to be established, the covenant written on the hearts.

The old order of Israel is being rewritten. The king, the Christ of Israel, will bring about a new and better covenant between God and his people.

But not just his people, Israel, but the whole of mankind now is in view. So it's Jesus who's unlocking the riches of Israel's history in exile and fulfills the mysteries of the prophet Jeremiah is speaking about.

Which brings us to verse 19. But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who thought the child's life are dead.

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was running over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there and being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a city called Nazareth.

[25 : 19] So he was, what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene. No one would care that Herod died.

I mean, they'd be rejoicing, wouldn't they? At one level, they'd be relieved. In fact, Herod had given orders that when he died, people are killed, so there will be some tears shed for him.

But the order was never carried out. That's how much he was despised. When Herod died, so did the initial threat to Jesus' life.

And so the way is clear for Jesus to leave Egypt, right, and return home to the land of Israel. Here's slide four, coming up. However, he doesn't end up just in Israel, in Bethlehem, he keeps going a little bit further up to Galilee, to Nazareth, because Archelaus was reigning in Judea, in the place of Herod the Great, his father.

Nazareth is a great place to live quietly away from the attention of Archelaus' brutal reign. For Archelaus was even more brutal than his father Herod.

[26 : 43] But then where does this quote come from that Jesus will be called a Nazarene? I mean, Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament, nor any literature about the Old Testament.

But read the passage a bit more clearly, a bit more closely. What does it say? It says, and he went to live in the city of Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets, prophets, not just prophet, but prophets, might be fulfilled.

It's not saying, according to the prophet singular, but according to the prophets plural. Not one prophet, but many prophets. Now, which ones? Well, the clue is given, I think, in understanding about Nazareth.

What the prophets said about the Messiah, the Christ, the suffering servant, by saying that the prophets, Matthew is saying that the weight of Scripture is speaking about him being a Nazarene. Just like the weight of Scripture speaks about the resurrection from the dead, although in a first glimpse reading of the Old Testament, you sort of don't necessarily get a hold of it so clearly.

[27 : 56] So, what is it about Nazareth that Matthew says fulfills the prophets? Well, let me tell you what the answer is. Nazareth was considered an insignificant backwater of a place, like some here might consider Esk or Yarraman.

Not that I want to offend you if you come from Esk or Yarraman, if you even know where they are. Galilee wasn't much of a place and Nazareth was even less. In fact, it was scorned and mocked by the strict Jews.

Remember John chapter 1? Nathaniel speaks about Nazareth. He says, Nazareth? Can anything good come from Nazareth? So, you pick the suburb, you pick the place.

Esk? Yarraman? Can anything good come from Esk? Not that I want to offend anyone from those places, but Nazareth is a place you'd ridicule, mock and scorn.

And there's the link to the prophets, right? For what do the prophets say about the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah, the King of Israel?

[29 : 06] Well, what the prophet Samuel says in 1 Samuel chapter 16? He speaks about David being the youngest and overlooked. Or 1 Samuel chapter 17, David is despised by his brothers as the youngest and ridiculed by Goliath.

It's this little pup coming out to take me on. The prophet David, Psalm 22, speaks about the Christ as a worm, scorned, despised, mocked, insulted. The prophet David says again in Psalm 69, speaks of the Christ being insulted, being scorned, being mocked.

The prophet Isaiah, now we're reading through Isaiah, right? And Israel is God's servant, right? And Jesus is the true Israel, is the true servant of God.

Isaiah 52, verse 13. Behold, my servant shall act wisely, he shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted, as many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond any human semblance and from his form beyond that of children of mankind.

So shall he sprinkle many nations, kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see and that which they have not heard they understand. Who has believed what was heard from us and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

[30 : 23] For he grew up like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no formal majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we would desire him.

He was despised and rejected by man, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he's borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted for he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And so the prophets teach us, the whole way to the Old Testament, prophets teach us that Jesus will be known as a Nazarene and by that as anyone from Nazareth is known, someone who is despised, rejected, scorned, he's the suffering servant.

So then the prophets of old are looking forward to something that they really couldn't fathom at the time. Who was this son that God calls out of Egypt?

[31 : 46] who was Jeremiah speaking about when writing Jeremiah 31? What were the prophets speaking about which means that he would be called a Nazarene?

They're looking forward to one born king of the Jews, they're looking forward to the one who is the true Israel, they're writing about the despised and suffering servant, the one who would bring about the ultimate end of our exile from our homeland, the one who would write a new covenant on our hearts, the one who would save us from our sins.

Many in the world still hate him, revile him, despise him, dismiss him, but we love him, yeah?

And we are blessed to have found what the prophets were searching for, the sufferings and the glories of Jesus, because his enemies eventually did crucify him.

He was mocked, scorned, strung up on a tree, despised by men, but by his death brings healing for all who will trust in him, which led to his ultimate glory, his resurrection to reign as eternal Lord and Christ.

[33 : 13] And so we love him and continue to grow in our reason to love him as his word fills out our understandings of his sufferings and his glories.

the glories of his wonderful wisdom fulfilled in Jesus, the Nazarene. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, as we consider the barbarity of mankind and your sovereign wisdom in preserving your

Christ, we praise you that he's the one who came out of Egypt, the one who was rescued from the destruction of the children, the one who was prophesied in the prophets, our suffering servant, your suffering servant, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus.

Help us to grow in our understanding, our love and our worship and adoration of him. For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.