

December 28, 2025

Matthew 2:13-18

As I've said before, Matthew is a Jewish man, he was actually a tax collector, also called "Levi," and was called by Jesus to be one of his twelve disciples. Some of you like to watch the Chosen, and one of the things I appreciate about that show is the way that Matthew is portrayed- he's a bit awkward, but brilliant, and knows the Old Testament like the back of his hand. As we read Matthew's Gospel, you're going to see how excited Matthew is to show how Jesus is the fulfillment of not only the prophecies of the Old Testament that explicitly promise a coming Savior, but everything in the Old Testament- every theme, every concept, even the nation of Israel itself, finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. We are going to see how three specific prophecies actually are filled in Christ, and what we can learn about Jesus from them. **1. Jesus the Son. 2. Jesus the mourner. 3. Jesus the Nazarene.**

1. Jesus the Son. After the Wise Men leave, Herod realizes that he's been fooled and in a fit of rage, he wants to kill him. We'll get to that later, but the angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and tells him to get up and flee, and that very night Joseph and Mary get up and go. Egypt makes a lot of sense as a place for Joseph to take his family. Firstly, it was out of Herod's jurisdiction. Secondly, there were likely around a million Jews living in Egypt- the great city Alexandria actually had a Jewish quarter. So it was likely that Joseph either had friends or relatives in that area. Now, from one perspective, it might seem like this was Joseph reacting to Herod's evil plot, but in reality, this was God's plan all along. Matthew says something astounding- "This happened in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled," and he quotes Hosea 11- "Out of Egypt I called my son." Here's what's astounding about that prophecy- when you read those words in their context,, it doesn't seem to be referring to Jesus. It's actually referring to Israel. The whole quote goes like this: "*When Israel was a child, I loved him,*

and out of Egypt I called my son.

*2 But the more they were called,
the more they went away from me.*

*They sacrificed to the Baals
and they burned incense to images.*

*3 It was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
taking them by the arms;
but they did not realize
it was I who healed them.*

*4 I led them with cords of human kindness,
with ties of love.*

*To them I was like one who lifts
a little child to the cheek,
and I bent down to feed them.*

What God is saying through Hosea is that he loved his people Israel like a son, and he led them out of Israel and guided them all the way through the promised land and fought and won all their battles and gave them everything they needed, and they *still* abandoned God for false idols and refused to worship him- this is a sorrowful lament from God. So why does Matthew use that phrase, “Out of Egypt I called my Son,” to refer to Jesus in Egypt? It almost seems like Matthew’s just taking words out of context and sticking them on Jesus. But he’s not. He’s saying something incredibly important. *Jesus is the true son that we all were supposed to be.* Luke mentions in his genealogy that Adam was God’s “son,” and throughout scripture we see that Israel in particular was called by God, saved by God, and loved by God like a father loves and raises his child, but his beloved child rebelled against him. But the same is true for all of us. All of us have been the rebellious son- God has blessed us and we use his blessings to dishonor him. Consider this quote from Johann Gerhard: *All the elements rise in judgment against me. The heavens cry out, “I have comforted thee with light.” The air exclaims, “I have given thee every variety of birds for thy pleasure.” The water says, “I have given thee everykind of fish for thy sustenance.” The earth declares, “I have supplied thee with bread and wine for thy nourishment. Yet hast thou abused all these things, and hast brought our common Creator into contempt.*

You see, all of us are rebellious sons and we have rejected our Father for idols, pleasures, and created things, we all like sheep have gone our own way. And Jesus came not just to die in our place, he came to live the perfect life of obedience in our place. He came to be the perfect son that we could never be. He came to love like we could never love, and serve like we could never serve. Christ is the obedient son, and because he took on our sin, we take on his perfect obedience and are therefore, children of God. That’s Matthew’s first point- where Israel and all of us rebelled, Jesus was the perfect Son in our place, and therefore, we are restored as God’s children.

2. Jesus the Mourner. Here we see one of the most shocking, despicable, evil, gut-wrenching atrocities recorded in the Scriptures. You’d think something like this would be recorded in other records, too. But this specific event isn’t. Why? Because Herod the Great did things like this all the time. Herod killed several of his sons, his wives, and many, many people. He was ruthless- a paranoid maniac obsessed with making sure no one could possibly take his precious throne. And it seems like, at least this time, he wins. Historically, probably about 30 or so young children and babies would have been killed by this order. 30 or so mothers and fathers and families whose hearts were torn open and slashed apart by the paranoid rage of Herod- and it seems like he won. Why does Matthew record this? Why does he think it’s important for you, the follower of Christ, to know that this happened? Because we need to remember something: Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the world, but the world he has entered is very, very dark. We live in a dark world, and we cannot forget that. And Satan along with this world will do everything in its power to fight against Jesus and make the lives of his followers as miserable as possible, and they will do everything to tear Jesus’ people out his hands. Don’t be surprised when the world

rages against Christ and his people. Don't be surprised- why? Because God wasn't surprised. Matthew again quotes the scripture and says, "This fulfilled..." Notice, he doesn't say God caused it like the other two events- he didn't guide Herod to do this. But he knew it would happen, and in his divine, loving mercy, he allowed it. Why? We can't know. But we can know this: Jesus was born into the darkness that all of us have to suffer. *Now, this is not just a pious commonplace: it is not a commonplace at all. For what it means is this, among other things: that for whatever reason God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—he [God] had the honesty and courage to take his own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with his creation, he has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He has himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When he was a man, he played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile.*

If you remember a few weeks ago when we saw Jeremiah's prophecy in its context, we saw that this prophecy was actually preceded and followed by a beautiful promise, "Stop weeping, your children are coming home." Yes, God is going to make all things new, all of us are going to be in a new world with no more sorrow and pain, but not yet. We still are in this dark world. And Matthew connects this prophecy to what we see at Jesus' Birth- so much joy, so much hope, God has begun his plan of salvation- but we still live in a dark world where Satan will do everything in his power to stop God's will from being done. God promises joy and peace in Jeremiah, but Rachel still weeps. God comes down to save, but Rachel still weeps. But look at what it says- "Herod died." And so will everyone who attempts to stop God's gracious plan from happening, and so will everyone who persecutes his people. The mourning is here, but it will end. Did this happen in part because Jesus was born in Bethlehem? Yes. But because Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a time is coming when things like this will never happen again. Jesus came, and he mourned- both in his life and his death- all so we would never have to mourn again.

3. Jesus the Nazarene. The third prophecy is one of the more fascinating ones that Matthew mentions, because he's not actually quoting anyone, because this prophecy isn't actually recorded in any specific Old Testament prophet. You can look in all the Old Testament, and you won't find any prophecy saying that Jesus would be raised in Nazareth. So what exactly is Matthew referring to? Is he just making this up? No. He's making a point. If you read the end of John 1, you'll see Nathanael, one of Jesus' disciples, is approached by Philip who says, "We've found the one whom the prophets promised- Jesus of Nazareth." And Nathanael says, "Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" The point he's making is that Nazareth was kind of a ho-dunk town. It's "Nowheresville." It's the armpit of Galilee. No one would have expected the Messiah to come from there. No one would have expected the Messiah to be the son of carpenter, or a traveling, impoverished teacher, or a humble man who washed his disciples' feet, or

someone who would waste his time calling the worst of sinners to repentance *and* the religious leaders to repentance as well. No one would have expected him to choose normal, blue collar fisherman, tax collectors, and other normal men as his disciples. And no one would have expected him to win his cosmic victory over death, sin, and Satan by being humiliated, scorned, beaten, executed, and punished. No one would have expected that. *That's the point.* Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in ways that were totally subversive and opposite of the way his people expected. Consider this passage from Isaiah:

Who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Meaning, Jesus would be rejected by many, many people.

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot,

and like a root out of dry ground. Meaning, Jesus would be normal, lowly.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,

nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by mankind,

a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces

he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Can anything good come out of a suffering naked man on a cross? Can anything good come out of water in a font? Can anything good come out of simple bread and wine? Can anything good come out of regular folks gathering in a building on Church street? Salvation itself- it’s not gained through moral behavior or wisdom or success or wealth or virtue, but by throwing all those things away and trusting in Christ alone. And the riches of God’s kingdom aren’t found in big fancy buildings or impressive people or wealth- but water and bread and wine and a book with words. And God’s Spirit is found not on the grand mountain peaks or ancient temples, but among normal people like you and me around his word. No one would expect that- that completely goes against what most people would expect. That’s how God works.

Therefore once more I will astound these people

with wonder upon wonder;

the wisdom of the wise will perish,

the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.

Amen.