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The Gospel According to Matthew

The True Israel of God

January 21, 2018

Scripture Reading: Hosea 11

Mat 2:13-23 Now when they had 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 is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (14) And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (15) 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."

(16) Then Herod, when he saw that he had 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 had ascertained from the wise men. (17) **Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:** (18) "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."

(19) But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (20) 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." (21) And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. (22) But 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. (23) 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.

Matthew is showing us that this baby born in Bethlehem is the Messiah King of whom the OT prophets had so much to say. We see every detail of his life, even in the womb and before, sovereignly overseen by the Father. In this short section of chapter 2, we have 3 Scriptures fulfilled while Jesus was still an infant.

And there is more. Let me show you. Look again at the first OT fulfillment in this section:

(13) Now when they had 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 is about to search for the child, to destroy him." (14) And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt (15) 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."**

Notice, by the way, how frequently angels are appearing in the account of the birth and early years of Christ. Not only that, but *dreams* are frequent. No one doubts the authenticity of the dream – angels appearing in it – is not questioned. No doubt these would be like no other dream the wise men or Joseph ever had.

In the first, an angel tells Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus into Egypt. The reason was, Herod was searching for him and trying to kill him. Joseph obeyed. We aren't told how long they stayed in Egypt, but they were there until Herod died.

The Scripture fulfilled by this flight to Egypt and the subsequent departure from there back to Nazareth is this:

Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Now, this is ironic first of all. In the days of Moses and the exodus, the oppression of God's people took place *in Egypt*. Here however it is in the "promised land," in Israel, that the danger lies and so we have a kind of reverse exodus. Back to Egypt they go for safety.

Hosea's prophecy of a son being called out of Egypt has the very common double application. In regard to the Israel of Moses' day, God called His people, His son, out of Egypt. The exodus. But Matthew tells us that there is a second and truer application of Hosea's words. One day God would call his Son, the Messiah King, to come out of Egypt. This was fulfilled when Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth with Jesus at the Lord's

direction.

But there is more.

Israel, the nation, those Jews back in Moses' days, were God's "son." You see this in numbers of places:

Exo 4:22-23 Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, (23) and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.'

God loved Israel like his son. He gave Israel an inheritance, entered into a covenant with them, redeemed them out of slavery by the blood of the Passover lamb, and told them that they were to become a holy nation through whom all the nations would be blessed in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham:

Exo 19:5-6 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; (6) and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

They, of course, failed. They broke the covenant right away. It would not be through the Law that the Promise would be fulfilled. Rather, it would be

through God's true Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is *the true Israel of God* and all of His people in Him are the true Israel of God. Christ is God's Son, and in Him WE become sons of God. And this is what Matthew is getting at. Christ is the true Israel of God. Peter could say of the church, therefore:

1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Here are more Scriptures that confirm this. Christ is the Son of God, He is the true Israel, the true descendant/seed of Abraham through whom salvation comes. Matthew shows us this and proves it by demonstrating how Jesus followed in the same pattern as OT Israel. He came out of Egypt and in chapter 4 Matthew will show us how Jesus, like Israel, went into the wilderness where He was tempted, but unlike earthly Israel, Christ succeeded.

Rom 9:6-8 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." (8) This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but

the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Gal 6:15-16 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. (16) And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Listen to Craig Blomberg on this:

“Clearly...a ‘new exodus’ motif is present. Moreover, Jesus will prove faithful where the nation had been faithless; in numerous respects he recapitulates the history of Israel as a whole. Clearer still is Matthew’s conviction that Jesus is God’s divine Son, both as regal Messiah and as uniquely intimate with his Father.”

Application:

We see here God’s faithful protection of His Son in the face of a cunning cruel enemy who would destroy him. Angels are sent. Directives are given. God the Father sees all of the schemes of the enemy and shelters His Son

from them.

If you are in Christ, then you are God’s son. We are the children of God. And therefore we can confidently trust that our Father’s same protection rests upon us. *Do you believe that?* In Christ, we are His sons. This is vital to hold to in all times, but particularly in evil and trying times.

Herod Slaughters the Children

Mat 2:16-18 Then Herod, when he saw that he had 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 had ascertained from the wise men. (17) Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: (18) "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."

There are also parallels in Matthew between Christ and Moses. Jesus is a kind of new Moses, born to lead His people out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Born to save them. And here in the slaughter of the children we are reminded of the enemy doing the same thing before:

Exo 1:15-22 Then the king of Egypt

said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, (16) "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." (17) But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. (18) So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" (19) The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." (20) So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. (21) And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. (22) Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."

And so, as we know, the first Moses was hidden in Egypt as well. All of this is once again telling us that Jesus has come to effect a new exodus for His people. The Bible often presents our salvation in Christ as an *exodus*. He is the Passover Lamb.

When you came in faith to Christ, He set you free from slavery and bondage to sin and Satan. That is an exodus.

But there is coming a literal exodus from this fallen world when Christ comes for us again.

Now, the OT prophecy of Herod's massacre is a bit difficult to sort out:

(17) Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: (18) "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."

We need to go back to Jeremiah and read this in its context:

Jer 31:1-17 "At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people." (2) Thus says the LORD: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, (3) the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

(4) Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. (5) Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit. (6)

For there shall be a day when watchmen will call in the hill country of Ephraim: 'Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.'" (7) For thus says the LORD: "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.'

(8) Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the pregnant woman and she who is in labor, together; a great company, they shall return here. (9) With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

(10) "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.' (11) For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. (12) They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall

languish no more.

(13) Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. (14) I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD."

(15) 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.**"

(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. (17) There is hope for your future, declares the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.

Now, as we have been learning in the Sunday morning class, this section of Jeremiah is one of the key portions of the Old Testament in which the details of God's salvation of His people in Christ *by the New Covenant* which is not like the Old Covenant, is promised and described. Wonderful promises. A covenant that will save. Written on our

hearts.

And yet, in the midst of these promises here is this *voice of lamentation and bitter weeping*. It is, says Jeremiah, Rachel weeping for her children in an area called Ramah.

How are we to understand this? Recall who Rachel was. She was the daughter of Laban, the wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

Gen 35:16-20 Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. (17) And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." (18) And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. **(19) So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), (20) and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.**

Here then is how all of this relates to Herod's slaughter of the children. Rachel's tomb is at or very near, Bethlehem. And that is the region where Herod searched for Jesus and murdered the little boys. So what Jeremiah is giving us, in the midst of these promises of the New Covenant

and God's salvation of the true Israel, is a prophecy of this grievous attack which would accompany the coming of Christ into this world. Rachel is said to be weeping for her children as all of the mothers wail in grief because it is as if Rachel is overlooking her descendants. The grieving mothers are personified by Rachel. The tribe of Benjamin's territory is very close (Bethlehem is in Judah, however) and they were the descendants of Benjamin, Rachel's son.

Now, consider this. *What more hopeless of a situation could we imagine that this?* Here is all of this good news Matthew records. A Savior is born:

Mat 2:10-11 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. (11) And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Moses came on the scene in Egypt, went to Pharaoh as the Lord commanded him, demanded that Pharaoh let the people go. What happened –

Exo 5:20-23 They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; (21) and

they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." (22) Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? (23) For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all."

But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Act 14:21-22 When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, (22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Ever feel like that? You obey the Lord. You put your trust in Him. You look forward to His promises – *and then your world crumbles and everything just falls apart.* Here are these Jewish mothers holding their murdered little boys. They had heard a Savior had been born, but now look!

Following Christ gives us His peace and His joy, but at the same time the enemy rails against us. *The common experience of the Christian in this world is "through many tribulations."* And yet our entrance into His kingdom is certain. Even in the darkest of times we need not despair.

And yet the whole thing was no surprise to the Lord. He had announced it centuries before through Jeremiah. The battle would still rage, and rage particularly fierce because the enemy knows full well that this King was going to defeat him once and for all.

Here then are Joseph and Mary with the Child. Can't go home. A king doing all he can to kill their little boy. In a foreign country. Thinks look quite chaotic.

In our day, in this life and in this world, this is what the Christian can expect:

They aren't. Everything is going down exactly as the Lord has planned, and so it shall be even when that boy goes to the Cross. So it is with you if you belong to Christ. Nothing in your life, nothing that comes your way, can ever be outside God's plan. Trust Him and stay on target.

Joh 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation.

