

Five Prophecies Fulfilled in the Arrival of the King

Matthew 1:18-2:23

Intro –

The genealogy gave a fly-over view of Jesus' origin through His family lineage. We saw that He is the long-awaited Messiah who would fulfill the promises to Abraham and David. He is the one who would bless all nations. He is the one who would reign as the true and eternal king.

Now we turn to the familiar narrative of Jesus' birth. You're probably used to hearing these verses when it is snowy outside and Christmas music is playing inside. But they do more than set the mood for sentimental holiday cheer. They show us that Jesus is the fulfillment of 5 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah to come.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel –

Haunting song of longing for the Messiah – Come and deliver us from our captivity!

Now, Matthew is shouting, "He's here! The one we longed for!"

1. He would be born of a ***virgin***. (1:18-25)
 - a. Joseph and Mary were betrothed when she was found to be pregnant.
 - i. Typically a year before their actual wedding, binding, much more serious than a modern engagement, could be separated only by divorce, which explains why Joseph is referred to as her husband and he planned to divorce or send her away secretly (v. 19) but was told to not be afraid to take her as wife (v. 20)
 - b. Remove the phrase "by the Holy Spirit" and you get a sense of how Joseph would have taken this.
 - i. The woman that he was betrothed to is pregnant. And he knows he isn't the father. He doesn't yet know it is by the Holy Spirit. The only conclusion would have been that she had been with another man.
 - c. Joseph was "righteous" – he was careful in observing the law with fairness and compassion.
 - i. He could not in good conscience marry her because it would seem like an admission of his own guilt. But he didn't want to expose her to public shame so he planned to divorce her quietly, a practice allowed by 1st century interpretation of the law.
 - d. Only divine intervention in the appearance of the angel stopped him.
 - i. Angels are very active in this early part of the narrative, especially through dreams. Doesn't mean we are to start interpreting every purple flying monkey in our dreams as a revelation from God.
 - e. Call Him Jesus, an act officially recognizing Jesus as his own son
 - i. He will save – name literally means "YHWH saves"
 - ii. Save His people from their sins – Tendency all the way through the opening of Acts to view this merely as deliverance from the consequence of Roman domination that came as result of their sin, but the gospel is apparent here from the beginning.
 - f. This fulfilled Isaiah 7:14.
 - i. There was an immediate and partial fulfillment in Isaiah's day but the full fulfillment was not until Jesus' birth.

1. King Ahaz and the southern kingdom of Judah were under attack by a coalition of forces including the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria. Deliverance foretold to King Ahaz before a child is born to a maiden and grows old enough to know right and wrong.
 2. **Isaiah 8:3-4** So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; ⁴ for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father ' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."
 - a. You might say that this passage *predicted* the birth of Isaiah's own son. But it *prefigured* the birth of Jesus Christ.
 - b. It foreshadowed the one who would be born of a virgin to deliver us. We face a much more hostile coalition of foes than King Ahaz faced – sin and death from which there is no escape in our own strength. We need a deliverer.
 - ii. **Isaiah 9:6-7** For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore.
 1. Clearly could not have been fulfilled by a mere child of Isaiah's day.
 - iii. Jesus is Immanuel, God with US
 1. His name was Jesus and no indication anyone ever called Him, "Immanuel" but this means that all that was wrapped up in the name "Immanuel" found its fulfillment in Him.
 2. What did the Jewish people need to know about God as they faced a coalition of hostile forces? That God was with them.
 3. What do we need to know as we face our own coalition of hostile forces? That God is with us. Jesus is the literal embodiment of God.
2. He would be born in **Bethlehem**. (2:1-12)
- a. Herod – Ruled from 40 BC to just after the birth of Christ, wealthy, politically gifted, but loved power and became paranoid in his later years. Even had his own wife and children killed out of fear and jealousy.
 - b. Magi – probably from the area of Persia/Babylon, group of people who ranged from "wise men" studying knowledge to charlatans. These likely were familiar with prophecies about the Jewish messiah from the deportation of the Jews to Babylon 500 years earlier.
 - i. Knew enough to look for the King of the Jews and respond to the star, but didn't know the Jewish scriptures well enough to look in Bethlehem.
 - c. Herod was troubled because of a perceived threat to his power
 - i. Contrasts the Magi's desire to find and worship the King of the Jews, even with their limited knowledge and possibly pagan astrology, with the apathy of the Jewish leaders and hostility of Herod's court. (Carson)
 - ii. All Jerusalem is troubled along with Herod, probably because they knew that a question like this from the Magi would result in more cruelty from Herod.

- d. Micah's prophecy is very precisely fulfilled in Jesus.
 - i. Odonnell compares these two precise fulfillments (virgin birth and Bethlehem) to as the closest thing to touching the wounds of Christ. When Thomas felt the hands and side of Jesus, he believed. As we see these fulfillments they are almost tangible reminders that God's Word can be trusted.
 - e. Of course you know the rest of the story – the Magi find him, present gifts suitable for royalty of gold and fragrant spices, and were warned by God not to return to Herod.
3. He would be called out of Egypt. (2:13-15)
- a. Different type of fulfillment in the next 3. These are more of patterns that are fulfilled in Jesus or what are called "types."
 - b. First of these fulfillments has to do with Jesus being called out of Egypt.
 - c. He is sent to Egypt along with his family by God's direct, sovereign intervention through a dream in order to preserve his life.
 - i. Egypt was a natural place to flee. It was only 75 miles to the border, was a well ordered Roman colony but outside Herod's rule, and may have contained 1 million Jews according to the first century historian Philo.
 - ii. Joseph, as is the pattern we see of him, obeys immediately. He is told to get up, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and remain. And that's just what he does.
 - d. After it was safe, they returned, fulfilling Hosea 11:1. But how does it fulfill this passage? It seems very different than the precise fulfillment of the virgin birth and Bethlehem.
 - i. In Hosea, the prophet is recalling how the Lord has loved Israel, called the nation out of Egypt and made the nation His own special people, and yet they have treated him like an adulterous wife.
 - 1. **Hosea 11:1-2** When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son. ²
The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols.
 - 2. No mention in this passage of the Messiah.
 - ii. Odonnell – at first glance seems like a man who squeezes into jeans that are two sizes too small and says, "look honey, they fit great!"
 - iii. This is a pattern fulfillment, much like the book of Hebrews demonstrates that the sacrificial system was a pattern of Christ. He was the true sacrifice and the true high priest that the OT system merely looked ahead to.
 - e. Now Jesus is being called out of Egypt as the true and faithful Son that the nation consistently failed to be.
 - f. Analogy of setting up a puzzle on a glass table, seeing the pieces fit together on the top and then realizing that as you look from underneath there is another puzzle.
 - i. On top you see the nation of Israel, the sacrificial system, priests, etc. Below, you see Christ.
 - ii. Need to be careful not to squeeze extra puzzle pieces in that aren't described by the NT because then can become mere allegory. But we see these things because the NT explains them.

4. His life would be accompanied by weeping for the children of Israel. (2:16-18)
 - a. In Herod's rage he had all the male children under the age of 2 killed around the area of Bethlehem.
 - i. Likely not a huge number, perhaps a dozen, but still horrific.
 - b. Patterned fulfillment of Rachel weeping for her children, quoted from Jeremiah 31 who was using Rachel as a stand-in for the mother's of the nation of Israel weeping for their children who had been killed and carried in to captivity.
 - i. Even in Jeremiah 31 it isn't referring to a literal Rachel alive at that time who was weeping. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin and Joseph who went on to be the family lines of 3 tribes of Israel. She is pictured as weeping as her "children" were killed and carried away in to captivity.
 - ii. And yet the context is one of hope.
 - iii. **Jeremiah 31:15, 17** 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." . . . ¹⁷ "There is hope for your future," declares the LORD, "And *your* children will return to their own territory.
 - iv. It was a scene in Israel's history that was loaded with emotion, similar to our cultural remembrance of September 11th. Historical event loaded with grief and emotion.
 - v. So now there is painful weeping and yet marked with hope. The deliverer is here!
5. He would be called a Nazarene. (2:19-23)
 - a. After Herod's death, which may have only been weeks after they traveled to Egypt, again Joseph was told in a dream to return to Israel and he obeyed.
 - b. He was afraid to stay in Judea though because Herod's son, one that he didn't kill, was now reigning.
 - c. Again God warned him through a dream and they headed to the region of Galilee and lived in a city called Nazareth.
 - d. Nazareth was a bit of a backwater and considered an area for Gentiles. It was not esteemed by the Jews.
 - i. **John 1:46** Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"
 - e. We don't have a specific prophesy that He would be a Nazarene. Two options:
 - i. Either it was a prophecy that was not recorded
 - ii. Or it was a compilation of the OT understanding that He would be despised.
 1. **Isaiah 53:2-3** ² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ 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.
6. Key truths
 - a. Joseph is an example for us of faithful obedience.
 - i. Minor truth
 - ii. We consistently see him doing exactly what God instructs him to do.

1. 2:13-15 "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you;¹⁴ So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵ He remained there until the death of Herod.
- b. Jesus is indeed the **Messiah**, worthy of worship and allegiance.
- i. Two precise and three pattern prophecies found their fulfillment in Jesus.
 - ii. 3 different responses to news of the Messiah
 1. The wise men sought Him out, tracked Him down, and worshiped.
 - a. The distance was likely 500 miles, meaning they traveled for months to get there.
 2. Herod was threatened. He viewed Jesus as a potential usurper for the throne.
 3. The other Jewish scribes responded in ambivalence. They didn't make the day journey to Bethlehem (it was only 6 miles).
 - iii. Only one right response, but only two that make sense.
 1. Right response is worship.
 2. Either worship or feeling threatened make sense. Both take seriously the truth claim of the Messiah.
 3. Ambivalence makes no sense, then or now.