

The True Israel

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[0 : 00] 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.

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 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.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. 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. 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.

[1 : 25] And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 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. 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 God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Inside the world's most authoritarian country, North Korea pushes gross misinformation and brainwashing propaganda on its citizens to have absolute domineering control.

Really, with a propaganda strategy pushed on its citizens from the cradle to the grave, North Korean leaders have built this cult of personality where they exaggerate and embellish the accomplishments of its leaders, really elevating them to this God-like status.

For instance, it's been reported that Kim Il-sung, who is the country's founder, they say that he never defecated and never urinated.

[2 : 52] He never once went to the bathroom. They say that his son, Kim Jong-il, he was this God-like golfer. In a sport where it's very hard for the average person to score under 90, and the best recognized score was just a score of 55, they claim on his first go ever, first time holding those clubs, he scored a 38 with five hole-in-ones.

They claim that even his son, Kim Jong-un, who is the leader of the country today, he learned at the ripe old age of three years old to drive a motor vehicle.

Just imagine our little Ina or our Zion contributing their portion of the rent because they're driving Uber. These are ridiculous lies, and they just scratch the surface of what these people have been telling their citizens.

But I want to focus on one myth, on the supernatural birth of the second son of Kim Jong-il. And they claim that he was born at Mount Baekdu, which is this legendary mountain, according to folklore in North Korea, has mythical qualities.

It's considered North Korea's ancestral homeland, when in actuality, he was just born in the Soviet Union. And on top of that, on his birthday, the day he was born, they say that winter magically turned into spring.

[4 : 27] A double rainbow graced the sky, and then a new star shone at night. It's plagiarism, right? This is just a bunch of laughable mumbo-jumbo, right?

It's quite frankly, though, evil lies. The reality is that they have been many, many leaders throughout the course of human history that have lied like this.

They have set up these elaborate, dramatized, supernatural birth narratives to create this air, this aura around them, so that they have this destiny, this calling to lead their people.

In this, they have taken facts, and they've turned them into myths. But as C.S. Lewis said, our Jesus, who was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, fully God and fully man, his myth become fact.

We know this because, unlike all these other fakers and liars, who make up all the stuff, all their lies after the fact, Jesus Christ is the only man who has been long expected, long predicted, long awaited.

[5 : 48] By some estimates, scholars have predicted that Jesus has fulfilled more than 200 prophecies given by different Old Testament writers written over many different centuries.

None like Jesus are more anticipated and predicted. And that's why theologian Lorian Bettner, he says this, in all the history of the world, Jesus emerges as the only expected person.

No one was looking for such a person as Julius Caesar or Napoleon or Washington or Lincoln to appear at the time that they did. No other person has had his course foretold and his work laid out for him centuries before he was born.

But the coming of the Messiah has been predicted for centuries. So in our passage today, when Jesus travels back and forth from Israel and Egypt, Matthew understands that there's more to this story than just Jesus' travel itinerary.

intimately familiar with the Old Testament, Matthew sees in Jesus' birth narratives how he is fulfilling these century-old prophecies.

[7 : 07] And how is he doing this? He's reliving. Jesus is reliving the story and retracing the steps of the nation of Israel.

He's taking upon himself the role of Israel, calling himself the true and better Israel. With this passage trio, the trio of answered prophecies that we see here, Matthew is proving this main point, that Jesus of Nazareth is the foretold Messiah and the true and better Israel.

And in turn, we'll look how Jesus, the true Israel, he relives key moments in the nation, in the history of the nation of Israel, how he relives the exodus, relives the exile, and then thereby setting up a new expectation for the Messiah King.

So we jump to the narrative and we observe that once the Magi, they've defied King Herod and they escape another way, the sovereign, omniscient Lord, he knows all the schemes of man and he sends an angel to Joseph.

This is his second dream in the birth narrative in chapters one to two. And he warns him of Herod's evil plan of infanticide. Joseph receives this dream in the wee hours of the morning and really one can only imagine what is going on through his head.

[8 : 38] Is it fear? Is it anxiety? What is going to happen to my family? What do I need to do to maximize our chances of survival?

Should I even go to Egypt? Should I go somewhere safer? Is he stressed or frustrated? Are you serious, Lord?

You asked me to adopt this son and now you're making me flee from my life? My life is already so hard enough as a parent, let alone the parent of the Savior of the world.

Aren't you asking too much of me, Lord? Was he considering delaying obedience? You know, the trip from here to Egypt is over 150 miles long.

It's going to take over a week with baby Jesus. Shouldn't we just get some extra sleep? You know, what is that going to do in the grand scheme of things? If I just get another couple hours of sleep and go in the morning, after all, traveling by night is so dangerous.

[9 : 45] We don't know what emotions Joseph might have wrestled with, but we do know that as the leader of the family, Joseph did exactly as he was told.

Matthew makes that clear because his actions, in verse 14, they match exactly to the command. It's so much so that it sounds like word-for-word repetition. He doesn't drift back to sleep, he doesn't dilly-dally, but he wakes up his family and they start their journey off in the middle of the night.

Joseph lives out this simple hymn, to trust and obey. For there is no other way but to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Jesus heads down to Egypt fulfilling what the Lord had spoken by the prophet Hosea. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son.

If you have an ESV Bible, you'll notice the footnote in there that hyperlinks you to the passage Hosea 11.1. And so we flip back there in our Old Testaments and to read the quotation in its original passage, in its original context.

[10:59] It's a habit that you should get into if you are not in already. And as you read it in its original context, you might be confused, frankly, because the more you read of Hosea 11, the more you'll see that this passage, it's not like these clearly messianic, suffering servant passages in Isaiah, passages that look forward, but this seems to be a passage that looks backward to the exodus, to the escape from Egyptian slavery.

So how can this be a text that predicts the future Messiah when it's looking backwards? Is Matthew trying to fit a square peg in a round hole here?

And it's worth hitting pause doing a simple thought exercise here. When you read Scripture, what kind of book do you compare it to?

What do you think Scripture has to offer you? Some of us read Scripture like it's a book of inspirational quotes, believing that the greatest thing that Scripture has to offer you is positive emotion, positive vibes.

We sit down in front of our Bibles to go through our daily reading plan, and if we're more chaotic, then we'll play Bible roulette and flip to any which passage. And we scour the text to be inspired, to be encouraged, to be motivated.

[12:33] And we look through, and if we get lucky, we find a verse that we like. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. I like that. So we'll rip that out of context, and we'll apply that to our lives.

We'll remember that and hold that throughout our days, and we'll feel good. We'll feel encouraged. All that other stuff, though, that's irrelevant. We'll throw it out. It's not important. Others of us read Scripture like a textbook, believing that the greatest thing that Scripture has to offer us is knowledge.

Knowledge about God, knowledge about theology, knowledge about whatever hobby horse you're into that day. We read and extract as much information.

It's just knowledge transfer. That's what Scripture reading is about to you. Still others of us treat Scripture like a law book, believing that the greatest thing that Scripture has to offer you is a moral code of ethics.

It's telling you, do this. Do that. Don't do this. Don't do that. So every story in Scripture is just about that moral nugget of truth that we apply to our lives and that we have to conform to.

[13:47] Every character in each story is an example either to emulate or to reject. While these contain some semblance of truth, all these miss the mark because Scripture is a book about a person.

And the greatest thing that Scripture has to offer you is not positive emotion, it's not mere head knowledge, it's not a moral code of ethics or morality, but it is Christ.

On the road to Emmaus, Christ revealed himself to his disciples and opened their eyes to see that he is the very center of Scripture.

He is the interpretive key that unlocks the greater meaning behind every single passage. He says in Luke 24, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them and all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Matthew understood that every single line, every single story is written about Christ. It is written to prove our need for a Messiah King and it's written to engender hope and expectation for his coming.

[15:03] So no matter where you are in the distant lands of the 66 books of Scripture, there is always going to be a paved road that leads you right back to the center of Scripture.

That's Christ. And one of these common roads, often connecting these two seemingly distant lands of Scripture, the Old and then the New Testament, is called typology.

Just the study of consistent and repeated patterns based on the conviction that God's workings is consistent throughout Scripture. Compared to how composers of movies or musical soundtracks, they do this thing where they set up a musical theme.

It's proper term, it's called a light motif. In the beginning parts of the show to get our ears accustomed to this particular tune. And then later on as the story progresses, you get to the climax

where the theme is going to be expanded upon.

It's going to be richer and fuller and more beautiful, but all with the same recognizable tune as before. Plenty of movies do this. Lots of famous movies do this.

[16:24] If you watch Star Wars, The Avengers, you can even hear those tunes in your head right now. That's how powerful that repetition is. Typology is exactly like this with lots of different musical themes playing out in the Old Testament, but then they all come together in this beautiful, expanded, rich melody of all these different themes that have gone on in the Old Testament, in the person and in the work of Jesus Christ.

So this connection from our passage to Hosea 11, 1, even though it's looking backwards, it's rooted in Christ-centered typology.

As we said, this quote in Hosea 11, it's about the Exodus where God delivered his son Israel from Egyptian slavery. That was the first time that that musical theme played out.

In our passage today, Matthew is hearing something familiar. He hears this musical theme of the Exodus play out once again, only now in the new Exodus of Jesus Christ, his son.

God calls him out of Egypt in the same way as Israel was called out of Egypt. And actually, we can see that Jesus is connected to different roles, both roles in the Exodus, both the deliverer and the delivered.

[17:56] Where am I getting this? First, Jesus is connected to the deliverer, Moses. At the beginning of Exodus, we see that Moses flees the infanticide of Pharaoh in Exodus 1.

But now, Jesus is fleeing the infanticide of Herod. Later in his life, after he murdered a man, Moses escapes from Egypt to Midian.

But then God calls him back to do his role, to do his work of saving his nation. And he calls him back in this way, go back to Egypt for all the men who are seeking your life are dead.

If you look down in your passage, those words are very similar to Matthew 20 or Matthew 2.20.

There's even more. Later in Matthew, Jesus' face shone brilliantly during his transfiguration, just like Moses' face shone when he interacted with God, so much so that he had to put a veil over his face.

Guess who's at Jesus' transfiguration too? It's Moses. So you guys see those connections. So weaving these connections together, Matthew sees this child Jesus as the new and better Moses.

[19:18] In the Exodus, Moses was sent to deliver his people from Egyptian bondage. In the new Exodus, Jesus is now sent to deliver his people from their spiritual bondage from sin and death.

All in Adam, we were born slaves to sin, that when our sinful flesh commanded us, called us, we couldn't do anything but to listen. And friend, if you don't know the power of your sin, I'd argue it's because you haven't tried fighting your sin enough.

Here's C.S. Lewis comment on this. No man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means.

This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting it, not by giving in.

That is why bad people in one sense know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.

[20:36] We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it. If you know how bad you are, if you've tried very hard to be good like I have, praise be to God with me.

Praise God with me that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body ruled by sin might no longer have any power.

It's rendered completely powerless that we might no longer be enslaved to our sin. Through Christ's death and resurrection, Jesus has released us from the power of sin so that all those who are united to Christ by faith, not by our works, but by faith can hear sin's call and we can finally learn to say, no, I'm not going to obey.

so may we never, ever say that we can't defeat our temptations and our sins. No matter how many times that you fell in your addictions, in your sin patterns, there is always a way of escape with every temptation that comes your way.

No matter how many times sinful flesh tempts you to lust, to be sinfully anxious, to be greedy, to be proud, to be selfish, you can always say no to temptation.

[22:06] It is a lie from Satan when you believe that you can't overcome those things. There have been moments in my life where I've excused my sin, where, of course I sinned, you know, that person was so mean to me, that person backstabbed me, of course I'm going to be selfish, no one

else is looking out for me.

What sins are you still justifying because you think that your circumstances are stronger than Jesus' work on the cross?

Do you still think that you are just simply swept in the current of your circumstances? That is a lie from Satan because you are never a powerless victim to your circumstances.

You can always say no because of the spirit that lives within you. And friends, this is so much more than just psychologizing yourself, trying to, you know, hack your brain with positive thoughts, trying to get the moral outcome or the behavior modification that you're trying to seek.

This is a humble dependence upon the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone and anyone who believes.

[23 : 27] Not only that, but Jesus is connected to the delivered, the delivered Israel as well. In the Exodus, God releases his child Israel from his bondage so that he can now worship God exclusively and now serve both as a recipient and a conduit, a channel of blessing onto the entire nations.

But as Hosea says in the very next verse, after Hosea 11.1 and 11.2, he says, the more they were called, the more they went away. They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. And despite God's kindness and grace to them, he didn't have to release them from Egypt, from their slavery, but Israel is an adulterous, faithless people repeatedly whoring after other idols and gods.

But now, the true and better Israel, the better and true Son of God has come in Jesus. Just like God called Israel when he was a child out of Egypt during the Exodus, Jesus, now he's called out of Egypt when he is a child in Matthew 2.

And once he's summoned back to Israel, he's called to fulfill what his role is as the Messiah of Israel. And he demonstrates that he fulfills everything that Israel was supposed to be.

[25 : 02] We read later in Matthew how he is the better Israel in this way. For example, when God provided the miraculous manna and water for 40 years in the wilderness, Israel grumbled, they complained, but true and better Israel.

He fasts for 40 days without food, without a drop of water and he never grumbles or complains. He never puts God to the test.

He never serves Satan, all those things which Israel had done for 40 years in the wilderness. How about that? Israel fails to dispel and cast out all of the Canaanites in the promised land but instead intermingles, intermarries with them and that leads them to their idolatry, their fornication.

But Jesus, he keeps his mind on the mission. The true Israel goes into the promised land and defeats all of God's enemies, namely Satan and his demons.

He doesn't intermingle with them. See, whenever Israel was tested, they failed. Whenever Jesus was tested, he passed with flying colors.

[26 : 20] Is that not the same with us, brothers and sisters? The law demands absolute perfection to be saved because God is absolutely perfect.

By that standard, no one is righteous, not a single one of us here. God has called us to worship him alone, but we have pursued idols like power, money, and sex.

God has called us not to use his name in vain, but we have sinned with our lips, haven't we? Sins of lip service, of unfulfilled oaths, of informality, when he is God.

God has called us to honor our parents and our elders, but we've thought better, haven't we? God has called us not to kill, commit adultery, steal, lie, covet, but we have done all of those things, either in our bodies or in our hearts.

In every place we have failed, Jesus has passed. Christ has passed every single test of his, every single one.

[27 : 32] But instead of writing his name on the exam alone, he has written the name of every believer on the exam, giving us, crediting us with his perfect grades.

Why do we deserve this? We do not deserve this. Therefore, because of our name on those exams, because of our perfect grades in Christ, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

As we're united to him, the better and true Israel. Praise be to God. I am a sinner. I've sinned countless times without measure.

God, he shows me unbelievable mercy time and time again. This is an unbelievable mercy we can't lose. We can't let gospel amnesia set in.

Thank you, God. Move on in our passage that Jesus not only lives out the new exodus, but he lives out the new exile as well.

[28 : 43] Verses 16 to 18. The wise men bought the holy family some time, but in the end, they only pour fuel onto Herod's fiery obsession with power, trying to keep it and control it.

Ironically, Herod is tricked by the very wise men that he tried to trick himself earlier in chapter 2. That should have been his first clue that he is way in over his head and trying to outdo or outsmart the sovereign Lord of the universe.

Yet, in his blind ignorance and unduly pride, enraged Herod, he starts to do some careful thinking, careful studying about when that star appeared, so that he could determine what age Jesus, the future king, might be.

He decides then to massacre all of these male children, younger than two years of age, in Jesus' birth town and region of Bethlehem.

I imagine my own son, my precious newborn son, as one of these. It's a horrid evil.

[30 : 04] There are some who question whether Matthew made up this story, because there aren't any extra-biblical, any outside historic sources that record this event, but this event is entirely historically plausible, because number one, the reality is when we read this passage, it sounds like thousands or maybe tens of thousands of children that are murdered, but the total population in the region of Bethlehem was likely no more than a thousand, so that likely meant only less than 20 children that were murdered.

Not to minimize this evil, but just to understand what the scale is. And given evil's Herod reputation that Sean talked about, this is really not beyond him.

Yet despite Herod's carefully planned, soundproof scheme, he is no match for the sovereign Lord. Not only is the Lord able to save Jesus, but this terrible tragedy is actually incorporated into his story to build Jesus' birth narrative, to build his resume that he is the Messiah, that he is fulfilling yet another Old Testament prophecy.

See, Herod tries to hurt Jesus, but in actuality he helps Jesus establish his Messiahship. Therefore, the Holy Family and Jesus can say, along with Joseph at the end of Israel to his betraying brothers, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

Yet one point should be made clear, our good God, he is never, ever responsible for evil sin.

Throughout the book, Matthew introduces quote after quote from the Old Testament, and he introduces them all except in just two places, all of them uses the more purposeful word, so that, in order to, that's the Greek word.

[32 : 19] This happened in order to fulfill scripture. But in two odd times, this being one of them, he uses the more passive word, then.

Herod's infanticide then fulfills scripture. God does not kill these infants in order to fulfill scripture.

Do you guys understand the difference there? Yes, God is sovereign over his creation, and he can use man's evil sin as part of his good plan, but yet scripture never attributes, never ever attributes sin to him.

God with us. And this passage adds another level of depth to Jesus' title of Emmanuel, God with us. Part and parcel of living in this broken land is to experience injustice, hurt, pain, sin.

So if Jesus came and he established his own utopia, his own perfect land, living in the richest of palaces, in the safest of lands, what good would it be that Jesus has this title, Emmanuel?

More than even, in what real sense would God really be with us? But no, as Tim Keller, pastor, has observed, even when God is sovereign over suffering, in teaching that is unique to the Christian faith among the major religions, God also made himself vulnerable and subject to suffering.

[34 : 04] So if this Christmas season has been hard, it's been lonely, it's been full of grief, if this entire year has just been hard, know that Christmas that comes in three days has more to offer you than just gifts or superficial fun.

This Christmas, you can remember that though he be eternal God, he came in the flesh and subjected himself to suffering.

Here in his birth, but that much more at the cross, at the end of his life, in how he died. Jesus came to experience to the greatest degree of pain so that he can empathize, not just sympathize, he can empathize with your pain.

He too wept. He too has lost loved ones. He too was backstabbed and betrayed. He too was lonely. So turn to Jesus, your greatest friend and comforter, the one who can bear the weight of all your

pain this Christmas season.

He is Emmanuel, God with us, God with you. And he does this ultimately by experiencing the new exile, fulfilling the quoted Jeremiah 31, 15, that passage in verse 18 in ours.

[35 : 35] Like before, this verse is not clearly messianic, but the key, again, is to hear the music. Hear the music of typology.

Because again, this is a verse that looks backwards. Jeremiah 31, 15 is about Rachel, the wife of Jacob and one of the mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

And she is figuratively weeping over her murdered and exiled children. children. When Assyria came along, when Babylon came along, with terrible sieges, with vicious battles, conquered Israel and Judah.

Now, Matthew is hearing that music again. In the exile. In Jesus' birth narrative, this time Rachel, she weeps over the murdered children at the hands of Herod and the exiled child Jesus as he is sent out of the promised land.

And this hits a particular nerve for the Jews of Matthew's time, of Jesus' time. Because while they may be back in the promised land of Israel, they still see themselves in exile.

[36 : 56] Yes, by the providence of God, by the faithfulness of God, a remnant of Israel has physically returned to the land. But Israel never gets back to its height of power and independence as she experienced like when King David ruled.

Instead, different nations rule over Israel and kings like Herod can do this to them. How evil and how wrong. You even get a sentiment of this, or you even get a hint of this sentiment and the opening genealogy of the book.

You read of the historical marker, key historical marker that they departed to Babylon, the deportation of Babylon, but we never read that they've returned.

So they continue to wonder who will be the one to stop our mother Rachel's tears. years. But they misunderstood two big things about their exile.

The why and the when of their exile. The why they were exiled out of the promised land, not because of a lack of political power, not because a lack of a political Messiah, but because of their sin.

[38 : 14] And then the when, the reality is their exile has started long, long ago. In fact, even when Adam and Eve were around, because their exile started when they were cast out of the Garden of Eden because of their sin.

This is the capital E exile that Jesus has come to deliver us from, sinners like you and me. We've all been exiled out of the presence of a holy God.

How did he do this for us? Galatians 3.13, Paul writes, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

The idea of being cursed, he's quoting Deuteronomy here. The idea of being cursed is synonymous to being exiled, spit out from the land.

And so Paul is seeing that on the cross tree, Jesus experiences the greatest curse of being exiled from his holy father. The relationship that he enjoyed for eternity's past, before the foundation of the world, he was exiled.

[39 : 31] Because he took on all of our sin, all of our heinous sin was imputed upon Christ. Christ became this curse.

He voluntarily walked into his exile, this capital E exile, because he knew that this was the only way for sinners to ever come back into the presence of God.

But Christ, and we sang about this earlier, in his perfection and glory, could not remain exiled, could not stay dead. But he would defeat the curse of the exile.

In his resurrection, he sets an example for us, our future hope of our resurrection, of our returning from exile, our full restoration in heaven, where we will be God's people and he will be our God.

And there we will dwell with him as we should, as we were intended for 10,000 years and for 10,000 more. Therefore, Christmas, it's marking the beginning of the end.

[40 : 42] The beginning of the end of our exile. We're making it back to the garden through this little infant child, this tiny little baby.

So you guys know, I just had a kid and I spent this entire Advent season just marveling how Jesus looked like my son, Theodore. The most unexpected leader.

He expects, or he sets up new expectations for us. So we come to the third and final passage, or section of our passage, where Jesus returns from Egypt, now officially fulfilling the earlier stated prophecy, Hosea 11.1.

He's finally out of Egypt, back into Israel. And he does this by fulfilling his promise by appearing to Joseph at the promised time when Herod died.

Throughout scripture, God has never once reneged on his promises. Not once. From Adam to Abraham, from Joshua to Joseph, from Eve to Ezra, God has always been true to his word.

[41 : 54] So why would he fail Joseph now? He's precisely at the right timing. So when Herod dies, he calls him through this angel, through another dream. Because Herod has died.

Witness the great reversal. The powerful, reigning King Herod has died. The weak, small King Jesus has lived. Once again, Joseph follows the angels' commands to a T.

Again, because Matthew has that repetition, that exact repetition. And naturally, upon his arrival, upon his return, Joseph likely considered going first to Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born. But there's only one problem with that. And his name is Archelaus, the son of Herod. Even with Herod gone, the enemies of Jesus still linger.

And we're going to see that throughout his story. Once Herod died, parts of his kingdom were split up between his three sons. And Archelaus took over Judea and Samaria.

[43 : 07] And history records show that the Jews were no fans of this king. Ancient Jewish historian Josephus records that when he began his reign, Archelaus massacred some 3,000 Jews at Passover, one of the most revered events for the Jew.

He was even too cruel for Rome. So he kicked them off. Rome kicked them off his throne in 6 AD, citing his tyranny, citing his evil.

And they replaced him with one prefect, a Pontius Pilate. Not only did Joseph's fatherly instincts lead him away from Judea, but he was directed in another dream to withdraw to Galilee.

So Jesus directs his family to the town Nazareth, a town that's 70 miles north of his birthplace, Bethlehem.

And why Israel, or why Nazareth? According to Luke, this is really where Joseph and Mary were when they were betrothed before they had baby Jesus.

[44 : 18] So they should be well familiar with this town as well. These changes in plan were all to fulfill our third and final prophecy.

And this one is unlike the others. It's unique because in Matthew, there's not a single passage where he doesn't, or all the passages he quotes directly from one particular verse in the Old Testament.

But here he's not directly quoting a passage in the Old Testament. The word Nazarene, the word Nazareth, it never comes up once in the Old Testament.

It's fascinating. Instead, it seems like Matthew is collaging together multiple prophecies. You'll see that literary clue in verse 23 when Matthew uses the plural prophets instead of the singular prophet like he does in all the other times.

What then are these prophecies that Matthew is collaging? Some think that Matthew is having, or making a play on words. They see the Greek word Nazareth or Nazarene connected to the Hebrew word Natsar, which means branch or root.

[45 : 39] And so then you can hear, if you're familiar with the Old Testament, the fulfillment of prophecies like Isaiah 11, which reads, there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.

This is entirely a plausible interpretation, and it might not be mutually exclusive either, but I tend to agree more with those who see that Matthew is not seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy necessarily in the specific name or in the place of Nazareth, but rather what Nazareth represents. Calling Nazareth a city in verse 23 is likely not the best translation because when we hear of the word city, we think of bustling metropolitan areas and gatherings of people pushing the bounds of culture and advancement.

But no, by those standards, Nazareth was no city. It was a small rural village with less than 500 people. Moreover, Nazareth was in the region of Galilee, not in the region of Judea.

And back then, Judeans looked down upon the Galileans. Judeans were much more politically correct today, for better, for worse, for better. But it's much like how the Civil War era, right, during the Union South, or the Union North, rather, looked down upon the Confederate South.

[47 : 16] They compared them to savage wilderness, a second-class citizenry, and an outdated culture. Like this, the Judeans had their noses in the air, and they scoffed at the idea of their Messiah King coming from a place like Galilee.

On top of that, it also seems like Nazareth has a particular reputation within the region of Galilee itself. One of Jesus' disciples, Nathaniel, upon hearing that Jesus is from Nazareth, and mind you, Nathaniel, he's from Cana, he's a Galilean too.

But then when he hears that Jesus is from Nazareth, he says, can anything good come out of Nazareth? If Nathaniel, a Galilean himself, reacted this way to Jesus the Nazarene, imagine what Judeans, imagine what the Pharisees thought, that their savior king, their future king, came from this dirty, lowly Nazareth.

So then the words, he shall be called a Nazarene, it relates more to prophecies revolving Jesus' rejection, his obscurity.

Prophecies like Isaiah 53, which predicts that the suffering servant will be without form or majesty, that we should look at him, that he will be despised and rejected by men.

[48 : 48] Now all this shows that God does not need to play the games of man to make sure that Jesus is well-respected, well-liked, popular.

Why would God need to fear the opinions of man? He doesn't abide by the rules of our man-made beauty contests to make sure that Jesus can save us from our sin.

No, God deliberately sends Jesus to Nazareth to be raised there of all places to overturn all of man's expectations. And see, this world never really stopped looking down on Jesus, have they? The arrogance and the smugness of the Judeans and the Pharisees has just continued right along throughout church history. And in our world today, there are plenty of those who think that they're just a little too sophisticated, just a little too educated to believe, to think and accept that Jesus is their Lord and Savior.

It's just too beneath them. Now, as I close, I ask, does that attitude rub off on you?

[50 : 11] Do you pause? Do your hands get a little clammy whenever the topic of religion comes up with your coworkers? Do you feel embarrassed?

Are you ashamed of this Christ, this Nazarene? I confess I've struggled with this. But we have to remember that as Paul wrote, God chose what is foolish in this world to despise or to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

God, no other name by which we must be saved but the name of Jesus. Only his name that has been given to men we can be saved from and by.

Christian, no matter how much they slander his name, no matter how much the world's smugness discourages you or tempts you to belittle or be embarrassed, never be ashamed to stand by and to confess this name.

[51 : 28] It's our highest and greatest honor to stand by Jesus. Only this Nazarene is the foretold Messiah, fulfilling hundreds of centuries-old prophecy.

Only this Nazarene has come to release us from the bondage of our sin and death and to bring us back from exile. Only this Nazarene is the true and better Israel who has come to fix all the stuff that we have gotten wrong.

Praise be to God. Pray with me. Lord, we look to you, Lord Jesus, again, depending upon your strength. My words are weak. My words are insufficient, but you are strong.

You are able. You are strong, God. So we look to you in humble dependence. Help us to remember you and make much of you in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen.