

In Keeping with Scriptures

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[0 : 00] As Ryan had said earlier, there will be a few spots today where you'll have to, there will be a few quiz questions or things of that nature where you can confer and then we have participation from the audience.

So there will be no lollies or that's something Jeff does. He throws chocolate. I don't. But I'm assuming you'll be eager to get the right answer anyway. But firstly, let me start with a question. It's not a quiz question, but a survey question as such. But put up your hands if you're a jigsaw puzzler.

Okay. Yep. Not that many. Too much digital reliance in this demographic, baby. But believe it or not, jigsaw puzzles are actually quite popular.

If you go to the game shop, yeah, you're missing out, you guys. But anyway, if you go to the game shop, there's actually quite a large section where they dedicate and stock jigsaw puzzles.

Now, I do a bit of, I'm not an avid jigsaw puzzler. I'm an occasional one. But one of the challenges with the more difficult puzzles is just how similar the pieces are.

[1 : 15] You know, the ones with the ones with the blue sky, for example. And sometimes you think you might have found the piece. The shape looks right, you know, sort of. It's blue.

But when you try to fit it, it doesn't quite work. Now, maybe the angle of the edge is, you know, maybe slightly just out. Or the blue is in the right hue.

It's all quite a precise exercise, isn't it, jigsaw puzzles. Because every detail has to align in order for it to be the right piece.

Now, in many ways, when we talk about Jesus as Messiah, the same thing is happening. All throughout the Old Testament, God has left clues or details of the Messiah.

And in order for Jesus to truly be the Messiah, all the details have to fit. Now, since the start of Matthew's Gospel, and if you've been with us over Christmas, you've started with us at Chapter 1, Matthew has been showing this to us.

[2 : 25] We've, for example, in Chapter 1, been given Jesus' genealogy. So, as to show that he's a descendant, not just of David, but of Abraham as well. Then we've been shown that his birthplace was in Jerusalem, because there's been a prophecy in Micah to foretell that a ruler will be raised.

From Bethlehem. Likewise, the fact of Mary as a virgin, which is a fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah. Now, you might think this last detail of a virgin birth would have been definitive proof, right?

Because how many people can claim to have that as a fact of their life? No one. Only Jesus. But, of course, you could claim that you're born of a virgin, but in those days, you couldn't quite prove it.

I'm not sure whether you can still prove it today, but maybe with DNA testing and all that, you can. So, Matthew now proceeds to give us more details, to show Jesus aligning his life with Old Testament prophecy.

And in our passage today, we have three more. The first one we find in verses 13 to 15. And so, reading on the slide. So, what we have here is a continuation of the story from Luke 1, last week, because the Magi, guided by the Lord, had decided not to return to Herod.

[4 : 16] Herod soon discovers, and so the angel forewarns Joseph to make their escape to Egypt before Herod acts. So, Joseph and his family stayed until, in another dream, God informs him that Herod has died.

More of that in verse 19. And so, consistent with what has been going on, God intervenes again, supernaturally, to keep Jesus safe.

But for Matthew, there's more going on here. Just as with the other events, this escape to Egypt is another fulfillment of God's prophecy. And this time, it's from chapter 11, verse 1 of Hosea.

Now, if you have your Bibles with you, I'd like you to turn to that. Hosea chapter 11, verse 1. It's on page 905. And I want you to read it, perhaps, by yourself or with the person next to you.

And then answer the question that is on the next slide. So, page 905, Hosea chapter 11, verse 1. Okay, and the question is, who is Hosea referring to as God's son in this verse?

[5 : 33] Verse 1 of chapter 11. So, you can confer, talk to your partner next to you or your friend next to you. Shouldn't be hard. Give you 10 seconds.

Not a trick question. The answer is in the verse. Okay. Okay, let's have the verse on the next slide.

Okay, it says, When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. So, answer? Anyone who is God? Who is being referred to as God's son?

Nope. Who said Jesus? Jesus. Enoch. Enoch. Correct. Alright. It's not always Jesus. Don't just default to that. The answer is Israel.

It's Israel and not the Messiah. So, why is Matthew quoting this verse about Jesus? Is he just randomly plucking verses from the Old Testament, and then as long as it's a reference to Egypt and to the sun, then he goes, see, another prophecy fulfilled?

[6 : 52] It may seem like that at first, but actually, what Matthew is doing is giving us an understanding of how God sees his Messiah. And this understanding is actually crucial for unlocking many of the subtle details that we will find in Matthew's gospel as we look through it in the lead up to Easter.

When you realize this, you will actually have opened up to you new perspectives of Matthew's gospel. So, what is this insight?

Well, it's the fact that Matthew sees in the Messiah, in Jesus, a recapitulation of Israel. Jesus' life as Messiah re-enacts key moments in Israel's history.

Jesus is the true Israel. And many of the promises God makes to Israel that at first appear to apply to them as a people are actually fulfilled in Jesus as the Messiah.

Now, Matthew is writing here primarily to the Jews, so he's trying to show them that God's promises of blessing to them are found only in Christ.

[8 : 07] Blessings to them, but found in Christ. Now, in fact, we will see that at key points where Israel had failed in their history, Jesus will pass the very same test with flying colors.

Jesus will prove himself to be faithful to God, unlike Israel. And therefore, deserving of the promises of God to Israel. And so, as we come back to this incident, which relates to the escape of Jesus to Egypt, we also remember that what it sort of mimics is God's sending of Jacob and his sons to Egypt as a place of refuge during the famine.

And remember, at that time, when the time came, God returned them to the promised land, didn't he? To bless them there. God called them out of Egypt through Moses.

That's what the Hosea reference is all about. And in the process, frees them from slavery. God is signaling, therefore, that with this event in Jesus' life, he's about to do the same thing, to free his people from slavery.

But instead of Moses, their liberator is Jesus. And instead of Pharaoh, who is their oppressor, it's sin that they will be freed from.

[9 : 35] And so, if you recall, in chapter 1 of verse 21, Jesus' name, when the angel came and said to Joseph, he said, you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save, rescue, liberate his people from their sins.

So, here then is another detail in the jigsaw. Jesus' life re-enacts the Exodus, a key event in Israel's history.

But now, with a twist. It's almost as if what God did to Israel in its history is a shadow of what will come, this greater fulfillment that now happens in Jesus.

Well, let's move on to the next episode where we find another fulfillment. And this time, it's regarding the children in Bethlehem. So, Matthew chapter 2, verse 16. I keep reading on the slide.

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious. And he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

[10 : 39] Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled. A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more.

Now, if you are listening with the Old Testament reading, that's a quote from Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 15. And the events that are being described here in Matthew chapter 2 and in Jeremiah 31, although they have parallels, there are actually two different events.

Both recount mothers who weep for the loss of their children. But first of all, Ramah, that being referred in Jeremiah, is not Bethlehem.

They're two different places. Both are towns that are near Jerusalem. And Ramah is actually thought to be where Rachel is buried. But if you read in Genesis the account of Rachel's death, actually it says there that she's buried on the way to Bethlehem.

So, not in Bethlehem itself, but on the way. So, whether Ramah is the place, we don't know. It could be one reason why Matthew refers to the massacre occurring in Bethlehem and its vicinity, because he's trying to bring both Bethlehem and Ramah together as the approximate location of the massacre.

[12 : 02] Now, in terms of Rachel, she's considered the matriarch of Israel along with Leah. Remember, both Leah and Rachel and their slaves became the mothers of the twelve sons of Israel.

So, Matthew sees her as representative of all mothers in Israel. But in Jeremiah, the weeping is for children lost to the exile.

That's what Jeremiah has been prophesying about, the exile. Whereas here in Matthew, they are weeping for children that are killed by Herod in the promised land.

So, yes, there's weeping in general, but actually those two events are quite different. So, why does Matthew then connect these events as though one is the fulfillment of prophecy of the other?

Well, to consider that, we look further in the verses in Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 15. So, if you've got your Bibles there again, turn to Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 16 and 17.

[13 : 04] That's on page 789. All right, I'm going to put it up on the slide as well. And this is verse 16 now, one verse on from 15.

And so, I'll read from verse 16. This is what the Lord says. Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded, declares the Lord. They will return from the land of the enemy, so there is hope for your descendants, declares the Lord.

Your children will return to their land. So, next question, question number two. Talk to the person next to you, everyone. And the question is, what is the difference between verse 15, which Matthew quotes, and verses 16 and 17 of Jeremiah chapter 31?

All right, so have a chat, see if you can find differences or one big difference. All right.

Thank you.

[14 : 36] Thank you.

Besides those who are there this morning. No, no, no. All right.

I won't pick on anyone, even though I'm very tempted to. Thank you. You may have found more than one difference. But the one I'm focusing on is the change in the tone or change in the emphasis.

For whereas verse 15 was about weeping and not being able to be comforted, verse 16, there is encouragement for them to restrain their tears.

Why? Because there's hope. The children they thought were lost to the exile will return. Right? So one is saying they weep and they can't be comforted.

[15 : 57] There's no hope. And verse 16 is then saying, no, but there's hope because they will return. Now, if you are familiar with Genesis, you may recall that Rachel herself had two sons.

Anyone want to guess who they were? Joseph and Benjamin. Benjamin. Correct. All right. And both of them were actually at some stage in the story in Genesis feared, lost to Jacob.

When they. Joseph was thought to be dead and sold, but actually was sold to Egypt. And then Benjamin, if you remember, was actually taken from Jacob against his will.

The brothers had to return the second time during the famine. And remember, Joseph had said, if you're going to come back, you need to bring the youngest son, Benjamin, back. And Jacob didn't want to do that because he thought, I've already lost Joseph.

Now I'm going to lose Benjamin again. So both of them were feared, lost by Jacob at some stage in the story. But in both instances, what was initially feared turned out not to be the case, right?

[17 : 06] They were both kept safe by God. In fact, God's plan for Joseph was actually to send him ahead of his family so that when the famine struck, he would be ready to save his family.

That was part of God's plan. But likewise, in the exile in Jeremiah, despite their fears, it was actually those who went into exile.

Not the ones that stayed, but those who went into exile that were kept safe by God. They were the holy remnant of God being preserved.

You read that throughout the Old Testament. Preserved to return to the promised land eventually. And so, here's the beauty of what I think Matthew is trying to allude to in God's pattern.

That just as it was in Genesis, just as it was during the exile, there's comfort in what's occurring in Jesus' day. That yes, the killing of the children of Herod was tragic.

[18 : 13] But the great comfort is that the child that really mattered, Jesus, the promised Messiah, he is actually safe.

And he's safe, yes, far away from the promised land in exile, but he's actually safe in exile. Because he's been kept safe in exile. Because he's been kept safe by the Lord so that he can one day return to fulfill God's promises.

That is the parallel that we see in Genesis, Jeremiah, and then in Jesus' time. Joseph's flight to Egypt with Jesus actually anticipates Israel's return from exile.

And I say anticipate because I don't mean Israel's physical return from exile. That happened centuries ago, remember? When Jesus was born, they were already back in the land.

But rather, what I'm referring to is Israel's spiritual exile from God. When Jesus eventually returns from Egypt physically and he begins his ministry to gather God's people to him, those who come to Christ are returning from exile because they're coming back into God's bosom to a place where his blessings flow, to a place, to a land overflowing with spiritual milk and honey.

[19 : 37] That's the image. And two weeks ago, if you're here at Doncaster Carroll's, remember, we looked at Matthew 11, verse 28. And there Jesus himself said, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened.

And what does he say? I will give you rest. So Jesus said, come to me. I am the land of rest. I'm the promised land.

And so, what Matthew is showing here is that Jesus again is reenacting, recapitulating what is going to happen to Israel.

Which brings us to the third and final piece of the puzzle in this week's passage. Jesus' physical return from Egypt, which then precedes Israel's spiritual return from exile.

So, verse 19 of chapter 2, we read in the next slide. After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel.

[20 : 39] For those who are trying to take the child's life are dead. So he got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

Having been born in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

And here now is the third and final question. Which prophet is Matthew referring to here in verse 23? All right. Have a quick discussion if you want.

And if you know the answer, you can put up your hands. Okay. Okay.

Anyone? Anyone? No one?

[22 : 08] Okay. I'm glad no one put up their hands. Because this is a trick question. The answer is, there is no single prophet or no prophecy that Matthew has in mind.

You can see that because the word there is prophets, plural, not singular. So Matthew is not referring to any single verse in the Old Testament. But instead, what Matthew is doing is he's saying that numerous prophets, prophets allude to the Messiah, the chosen one, as a person of anonymity.

No prophet refers to his name because the idea is, the prophets are saying, when Jesus or the Messiah comes, he will be a person of anonymity. God's Messiah isn't going to be someone famous.

He's not going to be born into a royal family. He will not have a reputation which precedes him. And so if you look at Isaiah 53, for instance, he says that the servant, who is the Messiah, will be despised and rejected, someone who is held in low esteem.

He's a no-name person. If you look at Zechariah 9, verse 9, another example, he says that Israel's king will come to them lowly and riding on a donkey.

[23 : 29] Again, no name, no reputation. So there's actually no Old Testament reference to Nazareth. You can look through the Old Testament, no reference of this place at all.

But that's Matthew's point, isn't it? So Nazareth is a no-name place. There's no notable history whatsoever as far as Israel is concerned.

No king is buried there. No famous battle was fought and won there. That's why there's no record of it in the Old Testament. And so if you think about it like this, ask yourself, what name did Jesus go by?

So I've got a few examples on the slide. Have you ever heard of Jesus being called Jesus of Jerusalem? No. Jesus of Bethlehem? He was born there?

So you know, you would think. Yeah. Jesus of Bethlehem? No. What do we know him instead as? Jesus of Nazareth, isn't it?

[24 : 31] Now, of course, Nazareth is now famous because of Jesus. Okay? But in his day, it was anything but. If Jesus were to step up into this pulpit and say, Good evening, everyone.

I'm Jesus of Nazareth. Nazareth, people would be going, Jesus of where? What? You know, I don't want to dismiss, you know, but it's one of these like small towns in Victoria.

And I don't want to name any because one of you may be coming from there. I don't know. But it's a bit like that, isn't it? It's Jesus of where? In fact, if you look in the Gospel of John, Nathanael in chapter 1, when he heard about Jesus of Nazareth, he said dismissively, Nazareth, can anything good come from there?

Right? So the idea really is that Nazareth, it's just a no-name place. It's no reputation. For Jesus to say he's from Nazareth, it's like there's no claim to anything. But again, that's part of God's intent, isn't it?

He's trying to show his people, show us, show the world how he works. And the way he works is counter-cultural and therefore surprising to us. God's chosen Messiah will come from obscurity.

[25 : 51] He wants to turn conventional wisdom on his head to burst the pride of humans and their egos. Because God's power is made perfect in weakness.

His glory is seen in the shame of the cross. History's greatest victory occurs through the death of his immortal son.

And so as we journey through the Gospel of Matthew in the coming weeks, this is the very same pattern you will see happening over and over again. Because that is the nature of God's kingdom.

This is what the true greatness of God's kingdom is like. What the world teaches us about success and wealth and how to find happiness and be fulfilled, all that will be turned on his head.

And this week we've caught a glimpse of it, haven't we? In the pattern of the life of God's Messiah. Jesus isn't the king that fits the usual mold. If you want to enter and belong to his kingdom, it will not be through the way that we would normally expect.

[27 : 01] God's ways are not our ways. Neither are his thoughts our thoughts. And yet, that's what makes God's kingdom great. So, for example, if you wish to find freedom in your life, it's not about running away from your troubles in your life or getting rid of your external oppressors.

Because what Jesus says here, what God says here in Jesus, is that freedom comes when you recognize you need to be saved from your sins, from yourself. Not by running away from other things, but to come to terms with your own weakness and failure.

If you want to find a place to belong and be secure and safe, well, a lot of times you're saying, oh, if God would just come and make my life better, get rid of all those trying circumstances in my life.

But no. What God says is that if you want to find a place to belong, then you come to a person. His Son, God's Messiah, Jesus.

Having a good life is not about God coming and making your life easier. Rather, Jesus is the good life. He defines what good is.

[28 : 12] And so, if you want a good life, you go to Him. You don't ask God to come and change your life. And when you go to Him and find life, you find rest.

So, all of this is actually very counter-cultural and subversive. It's actually the opposite of what the world promotes. But when you see it, and when you come to terms with it, it all makes sense.

And God has already been showing us through the Old Testament over centuries through promises and prophecies as to how this is going to work. So that when Jesus finally comes, it all makes sense because every detail fits.

You know, when sometimes I work on a jigsaw puzzle, you know, and I've been looking for this particular piece for a long time, and nothing seems to fit.

And then I sort of see in the corner of my eye some, you know, this piece that's sort of discarded in the distance there. It doesn't seem like it's the one because I tried it before.

[29 : 15] But then I pick it up again, and then I go, maybe, you know, I thought I did this before, but I, you know, tried again. And then to my surprise, it actually fits.

And, you know, and I sort of kick myself, if only I'd done that half an hour ago instead of trying all these other pieces here and it didn't work. But when that happens, there's a great sense of satisfaction, isn't it?

That finally you've found it. It works. And I think, I don't know about you, but I get the same satisfaction in discovering that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

All the details of the Old Testament fit. Everything that God says about how and what He does in my life fits. Everything about Jesus is in keeping with Scripture.

And when that happens, there is a great sense of rest, isn't it? And peace and joy. Why? Because finally, it works. Well, today is just a teaser, but as we look into the Gospel of Matthew in the coming weeks, we're going to see more of this as to how Jesus makes everything fit.

[30 : 28] But not in the way that we expect, but in the way that God does it. Countercultural. Turning convention on its head. Requiring us to reject the ways of the world in order to understand the ways of God.

So, do come back. Read ahead if you like. But for now, let me pray. Father, thank you for giving to us the clues in the Old Testament that point the way to Jesus.

Open our eyes as we look into the Gospel of Matthew so that we can see how Jesus fits those patterns laid out in the Old Testament. how He is the true Israel, how He is the promised land.

And as we do, please throw our hearts to faith and worship of Him as our Messiah and King. And give us great joy to obey Him as we live for Him and His kingdom.

In His name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.