

History Reversed (Evening Service)

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[0 : 00] I would like to begin with a picture. With a picture. And this is a picture from one of the very famous books of our time. This is from C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

A classic of children's literature. I recommend you read it if you haven't read it at some point. And I want to start by talking about a picture from this book.

In the book, there's an evil spell cast upon the land of Narnia. And there is a good king, Aslan, and he is a lion.

And as he comes back, the spell is gradually broken. The spell brings winter. It brings ice and cold and death.

And all the people in Narnia have experienced winter for many, many, many years. And Aslan is coming back. And I'm going to read just a little scene that describes the breaking of winter.

[1 : 03] Edmund is a boy. And Edmund was, as he was going along, he noticed that the snow, which splashed against them as they went through it, was much wetter than it had been the night before.

He heard a strange, secret, rustling, chattering noise. It was the noise of running water. All around them were streams, shattering, murmuring, bubbling, splashing, and even roaring.

And his heart gave a great leap, though he hardly knew why, when he realized that the frost was over. This is a picture of spring coming and the curse being broken.

Now, we are looking at the book of Matthew for the next two months. And we're going to look at Jesus. And today, what I want to say is that Jesus coming is a little bit like Aslan coming.

Jesus is the king coming. And when he comes, the world will be made right again. The curse will be broken and the frost will be over.

[2 : 17] I have one point and one application tonight. One point and one application. My first point and only point is this.

Jesus is God with us. Jesus is God with us. Let's open our Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 1, just verse 18. Verse 18 says, Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

So this whole passage that Nick so helpfully read for us is about the birth of Jesus. It's about his origins, where he comes from.

And Matthew wants us to know that the birth of Jesus was very meaningful, because the life of Jesus was very meaningful.

This whole passage drips with this specialness and this meaning around Jesus. Notice a couple of things. Firstly, notice all the supernatural stuff.

[3 : 25] There are miracles. There are dreams. There are angels that appear. We have this virgin giving birth.

We have dreams. Actually, five dreams. Not one. For example, look at chapter 1, verse 20. As Joseph was considering these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, all these dreams are happening.

It feels very supernatural and wonderful. And I think the point is this. Around Jesus' birth, God was at work. It was a special time.

God was caring for this time. Christians believe that God can do what he likes. He can do miracles and appear in dreams. And in this passage, he was doing a lot of that stuff.

Also notice all the fulfillment language and the Old Testament stuff. There's about five or six or seven Old Testament references and fulfillments that happen.

[4 : 31] A lot of them. So, for example, verse 22 of chapter 1. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

And there's a whole bunch of these.

What's the deal? Why are there so many Old Testament passages in here? And Matthew is very excited about this concept of fulfillment.

Fulfilling. So, we've got to talk about it a little bit. We need to think about how this fulfillment stuff works. And I think some people have a kind of model of fulfillment, which is a sort of prediction occurrence model.

I'll call it the weatherman or weather person prediction model. So, I look at the news and the weather person says, tomorrow it's going to rain.

[5 : 31] And then tomorrow it rains. And we say, the weather person did a good job of predicting it. And some of the Old Testament references are kind of predictions. But some of them are not.

And the weather person model doesn't really work. And I'm going to propose a different model for the Old Testament fulfillment. The model is a painter.

And think of a painter who is kind of working on a theme. This painter makes one painting. And then on the same theme does another painting.

And keeps working on this theme. Until at the end of their life, they make one great painting. That takes all the themes of their work. And presents it in the perfect, best thing they've ever done.

That's a little bit more like how this fulfillment is working. So, for example, this one in chapter 1, verse 23, is from Isaiah chapter 7.

[6 : 33] And it makes a prediction. Isaiah says, there's going to be a virgin and she's going to give birth to a son. It's amazing. And Jesus fulfills that. But let's take another one.

Chapter 2, verse 15. So, there's a whole lot of them. I picked the second hardest one for me. So, verse 14.

Joseph rose and took the child and the mother by night and departed to Egypt. And they remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Quote, out of Egypt I called my son. So, this quote is from an Old Testament book called Hosea.

And if you go back and read Hosea chapter 11, I think you'll be quite puzzled.

Hosea chapter 11 is kind of like a breakup song. God is talking to Israel and he's kind of breaking up with them. It's like a list of things that he has done for them.

[7 : 37] And a list of things they did back. And I can imagine Taylor Swift or something anyways. And in the list of things that God has done is this verse.

God says to Israel, out of Egypt I have called my son. He's talking about the Exodus. And this is one thing God in the past did for Israel. Because God loved them, he saved them from Egypt.

And Matthew says, Jesus being sent to Egypt is a fulfillment of Hosea chapter 11 verse 1.

It's quite bizarre, actually, if you think about it. It's not a prediction. It's just a statement about how God loved Israel. And the point is this.

The point is this. Jesus is not simply fulfilling the predictions. Jesus is filling the whole of Israel's history.

[8 : 36] Every moment meaning truth points to him and is filled in him. Jesus is the true Israel.

It's not simply a matter of prediction and fulfillment. Though it is that. It's more than that. Jesus is the new Israel. The particular point here in Matthew is that God loved his son Israel.

God more greatly loves his greater son Israel. And the way that God shows his love for Israel is like a picture of the way that God loves Jesus.

The technical term for this is typology. And the point is Jesus is the true Israel. Again, let's think about the painter. God is a painter. And all of history, the meaning and the ups and the downs are his pieces of art.

And Jesus is his masterpiece. Jesus brings all the meaning of all history and pulls it into him. Or we could say God is like an author writing a story.

[9 : 43] And he's writing themes again and again and again. And he's getting better and better. And his masterpiece is the novel that we call Jesus. Jesus is the true Israel.

Maybe we could say it this way. Jesus is the key to history. Jesus is the key to history. I read a book a little while ago.

It's a novel called *Midnight's Children*. It won some award. So I bought it at a second-hand shop.

That's by a guy called Salman Rushdie. And I started reading this book called *Midnight's Children*.

It's set in India. It's about a family with kids and grandkids. And I got very confused as I read this book. It was very confusing. There is this...

The grandparents kind of have a fight. And the grandmother decides she's never speaking to the grandfather ever again. A bit strange. And then when the children are born, there's like a set of twins born.

[10:46] And the two sons have heads that are shaped weird and they fit together in their head. It was very bizarre. I was reading this book. I had no idea what it was talking about.

I went to Wikipedia and I typed in this book. And the first line it says, This book is an allegory about the history of India and Pakistan. Oh, it's an allegory about Pakistan.

So if you know about India and Pakistan history, it makes a lot of sense. So I didn't know any of this stuff. I was sitting at this thing. What the heck? Are these heads? So the two twins are India and Pakistan and their land?

Anyways. Once I understood the key to the whole story, I finally started to understand what the whole thing is about. And without the key, I had no idea what that thing was talking about.

And the point is this. Jesus, Matthew wants us to know, Jesus is the key to history. Key is the key that opens the meaning of what history is.

[11:52] All of Israel's past history and all of our history since then is connected to this one center, Jesus Christ. And maybe we could say the pinnacle of this meaning of history is that verse 23.

Behold, the virgin, chapter 1, verse 23. The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Through the whole of Israel's history, they were waiting for God to be there. And now God is with us in a person, Jesus Christ.

This is so amazing. Jesus is God with us. He is God with us. One person who lived and died and rose again.

And God is him. He is God. If we want to know who God is, it's very easy. All we got to do is go see Jesus.

[13:01] Jesus is the key to history. And I think the idea is the presence of God comes to us. And as Jesus comes to us, everything that God promises, Jesus brings all those things.

So as Aslan comes, spring comes. As Jesus comes, all the promises of God come to us. Matthew wants us to see how significant the person of Jesus is.

Jesus is God with us. And that's my point. Jesus is God with us. Okay. So I have one application. Jesus is God with us. And I have one application.

All right. So chapter two has two groups of people, which kind of should point us to the application. And I want to sort of just talk about these two groups of people.

On the one hand, we have Herod. Herod was the king. And when he hears that Jesus has come, he is disturbed.

[14:08] Look at chapter two, verse three. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled. The word troubled means to be stirred up, to be shaken.

It's the same word when the disciples are on the water in Mark's gospel, and they see Jesus coming, walking in the storm. We say they're terrified. They're stirred up.

When Herod hears about Jesus, the king, he is stirred up. And how he reacts, he starts gathering information so he can control stuff because he's anxious.

And then he gets angry when what he wants doesn't go his way. So that's one reaction to Jesus.

The other reaction is these wise men, we call them the Magi.

And their verse is chapter two, verse 10. Let's read chapter two, verse 10. When they, the Magi, saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

[15:12] Yes, that is very poor English. It is superlative, superlative, superlative. There's three superlatives there. They rejoiced with joy. They rejoiced with great joy.

They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Matthew has one point he wants to make. They were very joyful. When they came to see Jesus, they were filled with joy.

And he uses bad grammar to get that across. So what's the deal? We have this one picture of Herod disturbed and this other picture of the Magi, the wise men who are joyful.

And I think the point is this. If Jesus is God with us, we cannot be lukewarm. Say that again. If Jesus is God with us, we cannot be lukewarm about Jesus.

The main issue for Herod is about control because Jesus represents a threat to his control over his life. Herod was the king.

[16:19] And if Jesus is king, then Herod cannot be. And that's the point. If Jesus is king, I cannot be king of my life. My wife and I have been watching Star Trek, Next Generation, if you care.

And my wife has never watched Star Trek before and we're three seasons through and it's very nice. One of the great themes of Star Trek is how great the captain is, Captain John Lee Picard. And there's a very strong sense of a chain of command in this TV show. And it's quite lovely, actually. It's quite a lovely thing. And because people love the captain and he is good, he is very good in the TV show if you watch it.

Because he is good, the ship is good. And Jesus has to be the captain of the ship. I think that's the point. Jesus is not just in charge of engineering and he's not just in charge of the medical room. Jesus has to be the captain deciding where things go. And if he is good, then our ship will go in a good way, even if it's not my choice. However, if Jesus is king, we can find joy in his kingdom.

[17:38] And this is the posture of the Magi. So instead of resisting like Herod, we have a choice to rejoice like the Magi. The Magi come and they give him their treasure.

They worship him. It's so exciting. We have no idea where they come from. We only know one thing. They came, they worshipped him, and they had great joy in it.

And this is the experience of many Christians. As we come to Jesus and choose him to be our God, to be king, we will find joy in him.

And I just want to say this. If you've been a Christian for a long time, part of the thing with the Magi is that they have this freshness about them.

And I think many Christians need to discover a fresh joy again. So this is the spirit of Christmas, to discover joy in Jesus. And if you're a person who's not sure about Christianity, if you're considering Christianity, I'd just like to say to you, you must look for the joy.

[18:50] If you don't know what is joyful about Christianity, then there is no chance that you will want to be a Christian. You won't get it unless you see why it's joyful.

Okay. I'm going to close, and I'm going to close just again by reading C.S. Lewis. My point is this. Jesus is God with us.

And because he's God with us, he brings everything that God promises to bring. And we can be like Herod and resist, or we can be like the wise men and respond with joy.

Anyway, if you were noticing, we sang a Christmas song. The last one, and our next song is a Christmas song. That's because this is a Christmas passage. Well, one week of Christmas in the middle of April is fine.

In C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe*, one of the parts of the curse is that Father Christmas could not come. And as the spring comes, the main characters find Father Christmas, and he speaks to them.

[20:02] And Father Christmas says to them, I've come at last. This curse has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last. As Len is on the move, the evil magic is weakening.

Friends, Jesus Christ is God with us. And because he's with us, Father Christmas can be with us. That is everything that is the joy of Christmas comes to us.

The evil magic is weakening. Let me pray. Father, we thank you so much for Jesus Christ. I pray that you open our hearts to see how wonderful he is.

And I pray that you'll give us the joy of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.