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Matthew 2:16-23 Prophecy being Fulfilled.

Matthew 2:16-23, *Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."*

¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Matthew is presenting Jesus Christ as the king in his Gospel.
Not only as the king, but as the king of kings.
Not only as the king of kings, but as the anointed of God.

- ✓ He is a king because he is born a king.
- ✓ He is a king through the virgin birth.
- ✓ He is a king because he has the genealogy of a king.
- ✓ He is a king because the Persian kingmakers saw him as one.
- ✓ He is a king evidenced by Herod's fear of his taking his throne. He is a king because he fulfils the royal prophecies, the prophecies that spoke of this one who was to come.

Matthew reinforces the kinship of Jesus Christ.

Matthew picks these four to show that He is indeed King.

Each one of them is attached to a geographical location.
All of them focus on Jesus Christ.

1. Bethlehem,
2. Egypt,
3. Ramah, and
4. Nazareth.

These four places will be significant in the birth of Christ. Most people in their birth are associated with only one location.

Jesus it says in the Old Testament, the Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ, the King, the One Who is to Come, the Great Prophet will be associated with Bethlehem, Egypt, Ramah, and Nazareth.

3. Ramah

V 16, Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

Jesus was born in a stable, a cave in the side of a hill in Bethlehem. By the time the wise men arrived, he had grown to be several months old.

They fled into Egypt and stayed there for some months, and then the angel told them they could go back.

“Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men,-”

The word “deceived” emphasises in the Greek, means to trick. Herod assumed that the magi had tricked and deceived him. They had tricked him by going back another way.

Herod was exceeding angry.

He slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Matthew 2:7, Herod had inquired diligently of the wise men at what time the Christ was born, what time the king was born.

Not because he wanted the information to validate the king, but because he wanted to kill the king and he wanted to determine the age.

Herod set to kill all the children from two years old and under, because that was within the time range that the wise men had told it.

Herod was a horrible, cruel, and slaughtering people all through his reign as an Edomite king of Israel. But here it says he was tricked by the wise men and he became exceedingly angry.

Violent rage. He literally went into a rage. He became enraged. Herod was out of control.

He was way out of control with his anger.

As rage blinds him and he does not even think about that, and he orders the massacre of every baby boy in the area.

Herod sent his soldiers in to murder them all. Soldiers going from house to house and chasing fleeing mothers who clutched

to their breasts their little ones and seeing the soldiers then rip the baby out of the mothers' arms, and with their sword pierce its heart until it was dead.

Now it says not only Bethlehem, but in all its borders, surrounding areas. Herod never bothered with whether this was the true king.

Herod set about to execute the real king of Israel, the real Messiah king.

Why would he extend it to two years?

1. Any baby that had passed its first birthday would be constituted a two-year-old. But when a baby became 13 months old, it was thought of as two-year-old.
2. The magi were wrong or miscalculated or maybe in case they tried to trick him a little bit themselves the first time.

Herod went all the way to two years.

The beginning of sorrows for Israel as they reject their king. This was just the beginning. Matthew wants us to see that as the very beginning of a Messiah's life takes place, there is rejection that results in death, right from the start, unbelief, wickedness, calamity, and tragedy.

That was nothing compared to the disaster that came in **70 AD**, when **1.1 Million Jews** were slaughtered by the armies of Titus. 985 villages burned down totally.

These two things are nothing compared to what will happen in the great tribulation when the false messiah, a greater far than Herod ever dreamed of being, will come and shed far more of Israel's blood than has ever been shed.

Why Matthew included here?

Because it fulfilled prophecy.

V17-18, *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."*

they no longer exist. They are dead. They are gone.

Matthew says this was done to fulfil prophecy.

Matthew is the only one who refers this in his Gospels that refers to this incident.

Reason is that Matthew's theme of fulfilled prophecy at the birth of Christ to establish that he was the king.

What Prophecy Matthew refers here?

Jeremiah 31:15, *Thus says the Lord: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more."*

There is the prophecy.

The prophesying of Jeremiah was one of the most tragic prophesying of all in Israel's history. Because he uttered the doom of a dying nation.

Jeremiah was crying and shedding his tears while prophesying knowing well that none would listen to him. Nobody would repent and the captivity was inevitable.

Jeremiah pronounced doom.

Later, there was coming one greater than Jeremiah who again would utter the same doom for the same nation, and he would also do it with tears.

Jesus did that over Jerusalem.

Luke 13:34-35, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!"³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you*

shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

The Bible tells us that Jesus wept.

So, Jeremiah sits in view of a people that are doomed and weeps.

Jesus sits in views of people that are doomed and weeps.

Even in Jeremiah's prophecy, there is a great hope!

Jeremiah chapters 30 to 33, 4 chapters in the heart of this book that are filled with hope and joy and comfort.

Jeremiah is talking about doom and the Babylonian captivity came not long after and took them all away, and it was a tragedy. But in the middle of this doom, there is great comfort and great hope.

This statement about weeping, and lamentation, and the children, and all of that, is right in the middle of the hope, right in the middle of the comfort, right in the middle of the joy section.

Why?

Because even though there is weeping,

Even though there is lamentation,

Even though there is crying,

these chapters look ahead to the coming Messiah.

These chapters look ahead to one who is going to come and make it right. There is going to be a change.

Jeremiah 31:16-17, *Thus says the Lord: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ There is hope in your future, says the Lord, That your children shall come back to their own border.*

God says to Jeremiah,

- Sad day,
- Destruction is coming,
- right to weep,

But refrain from weeping any longer because I will redeem them back.

God did after 70 years.

The same thing is true in the use of the prophecy by Matthew.

- There was weeping.
- There was Rachel weeping for her children.
- There was wailing.
- There was lamentation.

Because of the tragedy, the destruction, the doom, that came on a nation that rejected its Messiah.

But at the same time, there was hope because even then there was a remnant and one day, God is going to regather that whole

nation. God is going to bring them back and they are going to see their Messiah. (**Romans 11**)

Zachariah 12:10, *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*”

Romans 11:26, *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

There is a general parallel.

Jeremiah spoke about doom. The people of Israel wept about the doom, but Jeremiah said, “Don’t keep weeping because it’s going to turn around. There is going to be salvation.”

When Christ came there was weeping because rejection brought doom. But do not continue to weep because that will all be turned around and there will be salvation for Israel. That is the parallel.

There was weeping. When the captivity came and the people were scattered, there was weeping. When the deaths in Jerusalem came at the very beginning a sign of the hateful, vengeful rejection of Herod and a sign of the indifferent rejection of the chief priests and the scribes and the people that there was going to be a price to pay.

There should have been hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jeremiah's time. There should be hope in the hearts of the mothers of Jesus' time because there was going to be a turnaround.

There is still hope. There is still salvation.

Why Ramah and Rachel?

What does Ramah have to do with it?

What does Rachel have to do with it?

Ramah: Ramah was a small village five miles north of Jerusalem.

In Israel, there were two kingdoms:

The northern kingdom and

The southern kingdom.

The borderline between the two crossed right at Ramah.

Now Ramah was the border city between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

1 Kings 15:17, *And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.*

It was located five miles north of Jerusalem.

Now Ramah was the place where foreign conquerors ordered the defeated multitude to be assembled for deportation to faraway places.

When the conquerors came in to deport the Children of Israel in the captivity, Ramah was the deportation town. Because of its location it became symbolic of the north and the south, both kingdoms.

It was sort of like Ramah was the only place where Israel came together. Ramah sort of touched both. Ramah was always associated with weeping because it was at Ramah that the deportation into captivity took place.

So, Ramah was a place of weeping.

Why is Jeremiah talking about Rachel?

Jeremiah is drawing a picture.

It is not that Rachel really went to Ramah, necessarily, and wept. Rachel is a symbol of the mothers of Israel.

Ramah is a symbol of the deportation of the sons and daughters of Israel. The mothers of Israel are crying because they see their children taken away.

Rachel was Jacob's most cherished wife.

Rachel had given birth to Joseph.

Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh.

They represent the northern kingdom.

The northern kingdom is often called "***Ephraim.***"

So, the northern kingdom is seen as Ephraim, was the son of Joseph and Rachel. So that Rachel, from her womb, bore the northern kingdom.

Rachael bore the northern kingdom.

Secondly, Rachel also bores Benjamin.

Benjamin went to the south and is identified with the southern kingdom.

Benjamin identified with Judah, southern Kingdom.

What we see here is Rachel is a figure. Jeremiah sees it as if Rachel is alive and he sees Rachel standing at Ramah in Chapter 31.

The northern kingdom is deported by Assyria into captivity.

The southern kingdom is deported by Babylon into captivity.

Both the north and the south have come from the loins of Rachel. So, Rachel is weeping as she sees both sides of her family taken into captivity. She is the symbol of the weeping mothers of the history of God's people as their sons and daughters are deported. She listens to their weeping and she herself begins to weep. She mourns bitterly.

First, she is deprived of Israel and Ephraim, and then of Judah and Benjamin.

Genesis 30:1, *Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"*

It was Rachel who of all mothers desperately wanted to be a mother. Now she stands, as it were, in the middle of those two

nations by her seed in one and her seed in the other and sees them both taken into different captivities and it tears her up.

Jeremiah, by the symbol of Rachel standing at Ramah, says, "Israel is weeping because of the captivity of its children."

When the population of the land was carried away it would have seemed as if God had deserted his children, Rachel's children, as if God had deserted his people.

But no sooner had Jeremiah presented the picture of Rachel weeping then he came right behind it and said, "Stop your weeping because there's coming a restoration."

There is coming a salvation message.

They are going to come back.

They did!

In Jeremiah chapter 33, he even talks about the righteous branch, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be the agent to bring them back. In the end the sorrow will be turned to joy in the salvation of the remnant fulfilled and the captivity and afterwards.

Matthew shows us that the Holy Spirit also intended this imagery, this picture, to reveal the time of the birth of the Christ.

Matthew sees the slaughter of Bethlehem's babies, it says, "If he sees Rachel beginning to weep all over again," and so he picks up this fantastic analogy of Jeremiah.

Matthew sees Rachel weeping for her children.

Why Rachel?

Because Rachel was like the mother of Israel.

Rachel's tomb was right outside the city of Bethlehem.

Some Bible commentators tell us, the word "Ramah" means "height." Any place in Israel that is a height is a ramah. Bethlehem is a height. Some believe that Bethlehem in those days was referred to as Ramah. There were many Ramahs, incidentally, in Israel's history. Many places called "height."

Some believe that Rachel weeping at Ramah, as Matthew uses it is because of the proximity of Rachel's tomb to Bethlehem and because Bethlehem became known as a ramah, a height, a high place, so that that which Jeremiah used as a figure in his book was nothing more than a picture of what would happen again when the Messiah came.

So, Rachel weeps again. This time, she weeps not because Babylon or Assyria has destroyed her people, but because Herod has.

This time it is not because of some political foreign power. It is even the king of the very nation of Israel itself. The consolation follows immediately because even though the king has been exiled and the slaughter is going on, the king is going to come back from Egypt.

His gospel will be preached, and a remnant will be saved.

Rachel, you do not need to weep anymore. You can stop. The sorrow of the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem, babies murdered by Herod, sure, it was a sign of the coming doom. Sure, it was a sign of the terrible spiritual captivity of Israel that is still going on today. But in the end, there was a destiny, and the destiny was blessing and salvation for the remnant who believe.

Those little babies, they did not know it. Those precious little babies in Bethlehem at that time were the first casualties in the warfare waged between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdoms of his Christ. They were the first casualties. But ultimately, the victory would be won.

The babies surely the minute they died, went instantly into the presence of God who gathers the little ones in his arms and says, "Forbid them not for of such is the kingdom." The mothers, they could stop weeping because this very one who was now exiled in Egypt would come back to offer them a salvation that could unite them with their own babies.

How interesting?

The prophet gave us a picture.

We did not understand the picture.

Some of it we have to wait until the New Testament breaks it open because remember this, the coming of Christ is over and over again called by the apostle Paul a Mystery. It is hidden. It is the New Testament writer under the magnificent and equal inspiration of the Holy Spirit who cracks open the mystery.

What Jeremiah was saying when he did not even understand it, when he would have wanted to investigate it, search it out, and unfold it to his own mind. Would never be able to until God sent Matthew, inspired him with the Holy Spirit to give meaning and interpretation to that verse back there that enriched it in a magnificent way and applied it to Christ.

- The King come to Bethlehem as Micah said.
- The King has gone to Egypt as Hosea said.
- The King has caused weeping in Ramah by Rachel, as Jeremiah said.

4. Nazareth

V 19, *Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,*

Josephus writes about Herod's death. "Ulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot-filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath, and neither physicians nor warm baths led to recovery."

V 13, the angel told him to wait until he did.

The next move, the angel came and said the next place in fulfilling the prophetic word is Nazareth.

V 20, *saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead."*

Apparently, Herod was not the only one. There were some others involved, and the Lord had set them aside also. We do not have any word about that, but it is plural here.

V 21, *Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.*

They just came back to Israel, undoubtedly coming from the direction of Egypt, they probably came up through the south and they would have come to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Perhaps in their own thinking, that would have been the place to stay.

After all they knew the child was Emmanuel, God with us. They knew he was to be the Saviour, Jesus, for he shall save His

people was his name. They knew he was the Messiah of God. They knew this because God's angels had told them, and they probably thought Jerusalem was the place or maybe Bethlehem where he was born in proximity since he is the king, we better stick around.

V 22, *But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.*

He was afraid to stay in the southern part, Jerusalem, Bethlehem area.

Why they were afraid?

When Herod died, Herod had ruled everything. But when he died, the kingdom was spread around.

Herod Antipas took over the Galilee area up in the north. Archelaus took over the Judaea area.

Both of those were Herod's sons that were not killed. They were less powerful than their father, and they were not really kings.

They were more like governors or territorial princes.

Antipas in the Galilee area, the north.

Archelaus in the south.

When Joseph heard that Archelaus was in Judaea, he was afraid to settle there.

While Herod was still alive, Archelaus had gained his reputation. Herod had decided that he wanted to take a huge, big, gold eagle. Eagle was the symbol of the Romans liked. Erected it over the gate of the Jewish temple. That did not go over very well with the Jews, it was an abomination.

Exodus 20:4, *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;*

Because it was having other gods. The reason they believed that is because the Romans equated the eagle with Zeus and Jupiter. So, the eagle represented one of their gods or two of their gods. They were literally putting an idol over the temple.

There were two famous Jewish teachers at this time by the name of Judas and Matthias, not to be confused with the Bible. Those are very common names. Judas and Matthias, these two famous Jewish teachers, experts in the law of God, got their students together and stirred them up against it.

These students were stirred up and they had a good cause, really. They had their own nationalism, their own religion.

They climbed the temple roof and they started to tear that eagle to pieces with their axes. They were up there chopping that thing to pieces. They were arrested, brought to Herod. To avoid a wholesale insurrection, he sent them to Jericho for their

trial. They received a mild punishment. The two teachers were executed.

Herod died and at the following Passover, a rebellion broke out in Jerusalem because of the murder of these two teachers. This is right after, just before the time when Jesus comes back from Egypt. This tremendous insurrection because of the murder of these two great teachers.

Archelaus, who was now in control, quelled the revolution by slaughtering 3,000 Jews. He just lined them up and slaughtered them. Many of them were pilgrims attending the Passover.

So, it was an incredible time when Israel's religious consciousness was so high to move in and just create bloodshed and slaughter 3,000.

So, they hated the man, and they feared this Archelaus. In fact, he was so rotten, he exceeded his father in being rotten, like some of those Old Testament kings. The Romans even removed him. The person they replaced him with was a man named Pontius Pilate.

For this reason, Joseph had second thoughts about going to Judaea, and his thoughts were confirmed because he was warned of God.

V 22, *And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.*

Warned in a dream and to go to Galilee.

V 23, *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."*

Jesus was to go back to Nazareth. This was Joseph and Mary's original home.

Luke 2:4, *Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,*

They were to return to live out the prediction of the prophets who said he would be a Nazarene.

The term "Nazarene"

He shall be called a Nazarene" appears nowhere in the Old Testament.

"to fulfil which was spoken by the prophets, -" plural "- 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

If we are looking for the prophets who said it, we will not find them in the Old Testament.

They are not there.

We have no record of it in the Old Testament. We have no record of any prophet ever saying this.

Now Matthew says, “the prophets.”

How do you explain this?

Very simple.

The prophets said this. It just never got written in the Old Testament until now and it finally got written by Matthew.

The Old Testament prophets said it. Did they say some things that did not get written down?

There are plenty of things that were said very significantly that were not written down in the Old Testament.

Jude1:14, *Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,*

Jude says Enoch said that.

Want to know something?

He did not say it in the Old Testament. It is not there.

How do you know he said it?

Because Jude said he said it.

How did Jude know?

Because Jude was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

Who said that he would be a Nazarene?

The prophets said it.

It just did not get written down until here.

Do you want to know what is so beautiful?

Matthew does not even give a bit explanation.

He just says, “the prophet said, He shall be called a Nazarene,” which tells me that it must have been common knowledge that the people knew the prophet said that about the Messiah.

Nazareth was so despised, and Nazarene became a synonym for somebody despised.

When somebody says that “Oh, you Nazarene,” that was a term of ridicule. In fact, when the early church was started, they used to say that to the Christians as a kind of a joke.

Acts 24:5, *For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*

It is used in derision. Part of the reason the prophecy is here. The Old Testament said again and again about Jesus he would be despised. He would be despised. He would be rejected. He would be hated. He would be looked down upon.

Jerome reports the synagogue prayer in which Christians are cursed as Nazarenes. They say, "May they be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be written with the just, these Nazarenes."

If Jesus had been raised in Bethlehem, if he had been raised in Jerusalem, he would not have been despised in the same way. But God said he would be despised and being from Nazareth just intensified that. It was to be Nazareth.

He was despised, rejected, and finally killed. The Nazarene.

- ✓ Every single location, vital to the character of Jesus Christ, Matthew paints a masterpiece of a picture.
- ✓ Micah, he said the king would come to Bethlehem, and to Bethlehem he came.
- ✓ Hosea, the king would come through Egypt. Through Egypt he came.
- ✓ Jeremiah, there would be weeping like Rachel in Ramah of old and the picture of Jeremiah and there the mothers wept over the babies beside the tomb of Rachel in the Ramah of Bethlehem.
- ✓ The prophets of old said his name would be Nazarene, and he would be from Nazareth.

Each point He fulfils a prophecy that solidifies his right to reign.
So, Matthew says this is the king.

- ✓ By genealogy,
- ✓ By birth,
- ✓ By worship,
- ✓ By the jealousy of hatred, and
- ✓ By the fulfilment of prophecy, this man was born a king.